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SELECT ESSAYS

FROM THE WRITINGS OF

VISCOUNT MORLEY

OF BLACKBURN O.M.

EDITED, WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES, BY

H. G. RAWLINSON M.A.

INDIAN EDUCATIONAL SERVICE

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DEDICATED

IN RESPECTFUL AND GRATEFUL ADMIRATION

TO

VISCOUNT MORLEY OF BLACKBURN

O.M.

FOREWORD

SOME excuse seems to be necessary for adding to the never-ending flow of literary selections for the use of schools and colleges. The works of Viscount Morley, however, are not readily accessible to students in a convenient form, and this volume, the Editor believes, differs from others of a similar nature in that it consists of complete essays and not of extracts or detached passages. These essays, besides being admirable models of English prose as wielded by one of the great masters of style in the Victorian era, are full of ripe wisdom and noble reflections on literature and life. For this reason they are singularly well adapted for class reading.

For the short biography with which this volume opens, the Editor is indebted to Viscount Morley's own *Recollections*, and to the articles by Mr. H. Chisholm in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, by Mr. H. Macpherson in *Chambers' Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, and by Professor Pollard in *History* (Jan. 1919). Notes are always a necessary evil, and I would have gladly dispensed with them altogether. Lord Morley's Essays, however, teem with literary allusions, particularly to his favourite French authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

It would be too much to expect that the average student of the class for whom this little book is intended would have either the means or the leisure to hunt up all these for himself. I therefore have thought it advisable to offer him such brief assistance as was, in my opinion, necessary for the full appreciation of the text. Much has been designedly left for the reader to find out for himself. Most of the Essays selected deal with general literary topics; but two admirable examples of Lord Morley's biographical style have also been included.

H. G. RAWLINSON.

DHARWAR, INDIA, 1923.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	vii
VISCOUNT MORLEY: AN APPRECIATION	xi
POPULAR CULTURE	1
THE STUDY OF LITERATURE	35
APHORISMS	64
THE DEATH OF MR. MILL	101
MACAULAY	115
VALEDICTORY	152
NOTES	170

VISCOUNT MORLEY

AN APPRECIATION

JOHN MORLEY, now Viscount Morley of Blackburn, O.M., was born at Blackburn in Lancashire on Christmas Eve, 1838. His father was a well-known local surgeon, a stern, silent man of evangelical tendencies. The home-life of the Morley family was severe and simple. It was characteristic of the age and place—for Lancashire is a bleak, forbidden county, with its smoking factories and clanging machinery; the ringing of the bells to call the workers long before dawn and the clatter of their wooden clogs upon the pavement was one of Morley's earliest recollections. Lancashire folk are true sons of the soil,—shrewd, hard-bitten, independent, but homely and sincere, and kind to those they know and like.

Young Morley received a sound education at University College, London, Cheltenham, and Lincoln College, Oxford. He never distinguished himself highly in examinations, probably, as Professor Pollard remarks, because he was more interested in what people had said than in the way they said it. Of his single prize-poem it was observed by the examiners that it contained the makings of a sound

prose style! However, he acquired a wide knowledge of classical and modern literature, and read deeply in history. When Morley left College, he found England passing through stirring times. The Industrial Revolution, Chartism and the Reform Bill had shaken her to the foundations. The utilitarians had found, or imagined they found, a solution to all these problems in the Ballot Box: Carlyle, on the other hand, was denouncing them and all their works, and offering, as a panacea for the social and political evils of the day, an incongruous combination of Prussian absolutism and the Transcendental Philosophy.

Morley, however, was destined for the opposite camp. Early contact with George Meredith and John Stuart Mill influenced him strongly in favour of advanced liberalism, and it was as the disciple of Mill that he made his *début* into the literary world. Morley was early known as the prophet of rationalism. Through Frederic Harrison he had become acquainted with the Positivist Philosophy, though an innate "anti-sectarian instinct" deterred him from subscribing to any particular creed. "Preferences but no Exclusions" was always Morley's motto, and it is characteristic of the man that he should have taken as the subject of the earliest of his studies the Catholic Joseph Le Maistre, and should have been throughout his life an admirer of Cardinal Newman and a reader of his sermons. Among living writers, after Meredith and Mill, Comte, Victor Hugo, George Sand and Mazzini affected him most profoundly. Among the dead, Burke, "the

greatest man since Milton," was his political oracle, and Turgot his model of a practical statesman. To him, as to Carlyle, the French Revolution was the great central drama, the focus of modern European history, and his volumes on the Encyclopedists are perhaps his most valuable and enduring contributions to literature. Unlike Carlyle, however, Morley refused to look upon the eighteenth century as a bankrupt age of chicanery and fraud, only waiting to be swept away in the *débris* of a great political cataclysm. Carlyle represents the German point of view, Morley the French. Carlyle, as Morley says, was a prophet but not a philosopher. Morley, on the other hand, was essentially of the philosophic temperament. *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas* is his favourite quotation from his favourite Latin poet. His mission, Gambetta once remarked, was to interpret the French mind to the English.

Morley was for a long time undecided whether he should choose literature or the bar as a profession, and there is little doubt that England lost in him a distinguished lawyer. Finally he decided upon journalism, and after making his mark as an occasional contributor to the Reviews, and also as editor of the *Literary Gazette* and *Morning Star* in 1867, mainly through the influence of Cotter Morison, he was appointed successor to George Henry Lewes as editor of the *Fortnightly*, a post which he held with conspicuous success till 1882. Under him, the *Fortnightly* became the recognised exponent of rational and liberal thought. Morley gathered together a galaxy of brilliant contributors, among

whom may be named Leslie Stephen, Huxley, Bagehot, Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, Meredith, Swinburne and Rossetti. The editor himself contributed to it many papers, most of which have been since collected in his *Studies in Literature* and the three volumes of the *Miscellanies*. Between 1874 and 1878 appeared books on his favourite French subjects, Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot, and the former year also saw the publication of his characteristic little volume on *Compromise*, "an essay on some of the limits that seemed to be set by sound reason to the various arts of economy, accommodation, management, conformity." This work made a profound impression: it was translated into many languages, among them being Urdu and Gujarati. In 1881 appeared a *Life of Cobden*. An even more important venture was the now famous *Englishmen of Letters* series, which Morley edited for Macmillans, the great publishing house whose head, Alexander Macmillan, was one of his oldest friends. This series included contributions from many famous writers: one of the most remarkable volumes was that by the editor himself, upon Burke. For the same firm he also edited the *Twelve English Statesmen*, and he became afterwards its literary adviser.

Morley was now turning from literature to politics. In 1875, he had made the acquaintance of Joseph Chamberlain, thanks to whom he became accustomed to platform-speaking. In 1880, the General Election, in which the great issues between Gladstone and Disraeli were to be fought out, was drawing near. Morley now undertook the editorship of the *Pall*

Mall Gazette, and definitely entered the arena on the Liberal side. One of the foremost subjects taken up by the *Pall Mall Gazette* was the Irish question. Morley had steadily opposed the policy of coercion, and when, on May 6th, 1882, the world was horrified by the news of the Phœnix Park murders, he came in for his full share of the obloquy. Sir Alfred Lyall taunted him with "teaching the dangerous classes in India, when you shew that men can terrorize by assassination": to which Morley characteristically replied: "I am as much for order—even temporary and provisional order—as you are . . . not locking up politicians by *lettres de cachet*, but thoroughly reorganizing the police. . . . Mere bullying isn't governing."

In 1883, Morley was returned to parliament as member for Newcastle-on-Tyne, and three years later he was offered the post of Irish Secretary by Mr. Gladstone. This he accepted with some diffidence: his views on Ireland were not shared by Chamberlain, and Huxley (who had had differences with the great Liberal leader on the subject of the Gadarene swine and other kindred topics) humorously warned him that he would be left in the lurch, as Gordon had been at Khartoum! It proved to be only a brief term of office, for a few months later the Home Rule Bill split the party into fragments. He resumed his old post, however, when Mr. Gladstone once more returned to office in 1892. In 1895 he lost his seat, mainly on the question of a compulsory eight hours' day for miners, but in the following year he was elected for the Montrose

Burghs. In the same year, Oxford University conferred upon him and his old friend and political opponent (Chamberlain had seceded from the Liberal party over Home Rule), the degree of D.C.L.

In 1898 occurred the death of W. E. Gladstone, and Morley was appointed as literary executor of the great statesman whom he had loved and served for so many years. For four years he remained immersed in the appalling mass of the Hawarden archives,—the Boer War was a temporary interruption to his studies,—and in 1903 appeared his great *Life of Gladstone* in three volumes. There was some fear that, dealing as he was with contemporary politics in which he had taken so prominent a share, the biographer might be lost in the historian. But Morley's sense of literary proportion triumphed over these difficulties, and Gladstone stands out as the central figure of the scene. The work was a phenomenal success. Thirty thousand copies were sold in a single week, and ten times that number in the next ten years. A characteristic action of Morley's was the presentation in 1902, to Cambridge University of the noble historical library of Lord Acton, placed at his disposal by the generosity of his old friend Andrew Carnegie. In 1904 he found himself among the original recipients of the coveted Order of Merit, instituted by King Edward, and four years later he became Chancellor of Manchester University.

In the same year he was raised to the peerage and took his seat in the House of Lords as Viscount Morley of Blackburn and Secretary of State for

India, an office which he held until his resignation in 1914. Of Lord Morley's memorable work for India it would be out of place to speak here at any length. In conjunction with Lord Minto,—and surely Viceroy and Secretary of State never worked together in more perfect harmony and cooperation—he undertook the momentous task of giving India her first instalment of constitutional government. In this he was aided by the advice and cooperation of one of the foremost of Indian thinkers and politicians, G. K. Gokhale, with whose views and aspirations Lord Morley always shewed the deepest sympathy. To Lord Morley also fell the thankless task of tackling the outburst of anarchy which culminated in the dastardly attack upon Lord and Lady Minto, and he handled the situation with the same conspicuous firmness, tact and moderation, and the same steadfast refusal to yield to panic, which he had displayed years ago in dealing with a similar situation in Ireland. In 1914, as he tells us himself, "the war and our action in it led to my retirement from public office," and this was the close of a great and memorable political career.

II

In literature and politics, Lord Morley is a consistent exponent of the creed of philosophic liberalism. His prolonged study of the literature of the greatest event of modern times prior to the war of 1914, the French Revolution, convinced him of the futility of a political theory divorced from the facts of life. He saw that Liberty, Equality and Fraternity,

enforced at the point of the bayonet, meant, not the dawn of a Golden Age, but the advent of tyranny and oppression. His study of Burke, as well as his own profound historic sense, taught him the value of ancient and long tried political institutions, and helped him to realize that progress depends, not upon any particular shibboleth, but upon the gradual building up of individual freedom and the advance of knowledge. To him the true function of the British Empire has been not, in the words of the great Roman poet

Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos,

but to guide the nations subjected to her care to the realization of their highest political and social ideals. In a word, her destiny is to be, not the mistress but the pioneer of humanity. A passionate hatred of tyranny and oppression in all its forms has always been accompanied in him by a resolute determination not to pander to the forces of anarchy and disorder. The dreams of the socialist have no attraction for Lord Morley. In India and in Ireland alike, his ideal was one of consistent and cautious progress, the unflinching determination to right real wrongs, accompanied by an equally firm refusal to yield a jot to threats of violence. Lord Morley has not seldom found himself upon the unpopular side, but this has never affected his determination to put his principles into practice. His general policy cannot be better described than in the words of his friend and companion Mr. Asquith. He has sought "not for this class or that class, but for all the community—

every class of the community without distinction, without discrimination, without partiality or preference,—to secure for all the community freedom in its fullest and most fruitful sense, both in corporate and individual life." Added to this must be the abhorrence of cant, the complete candour and uncompromising straightforwardness, which has always distinguished Lord Morley's utterances and deeds.

Like Wordsworth's *Happy Warrior*,

> In a state where men are tempted still
> To evil for a guard against worse ill,
> And what in quality or act is best,
> Doth seldom on a right foundation rest,
> He labours good on good to fix and owes
> To virtue every triumph that he knows:
> Who, if he rise to station of command
> Rises by open means: and there will stand
> On honourable terms, or else retire.

Lord Morley's style is a true reflection of the man, simple, manly and restrained. His writings contain none of the purple patches of Walter Pater or Oscar Wilde, none of the laborious searching for the *mot propre*, the epigrammatic cleverness of R. L. Stevenson. "As to literary form," he tells us in his *Recollections*, "I took too little thought, only seeking correctness, and that after all is the prime essential. . . . whether the hunt be for a plain word or a fine one, it is less material than the excision of superfluous words, of connecting particles, introductory phrases and the like things, that seem more trivial for a reader's comfort than they are. In a larger sense than this, how sagacious was Schiller's saying

that "an artist may be known rather by what he *omits*." Or take his advice to the students of the London Extension Class. "I have very little faith in the rules of style," he tells them, "though I have an unbounded faith in the virtue of cultivating direct and precise expression. . . . Everybody must be urgent for attention to expression, if that attention be exercised in the right way. It has been said a million times that the foundation of right expression in speech or writing is sincerity. This is as true now as it has ever been. Right expression is a part of character. . . . Cultivate that golden art—the steadfast use of a language in which truth can be told; a speech that is strong by natural force and not merely effective by declamation; an utterance without trick, without affectation, without mannerisms, without any of that excessive ambition which overleaps itself as disastrously in prose writing as in so many other things." The "dignity and purity of the English language" are, he tells us, its most precious attributes, and this noble instrument must be guarded jealously from defilement. Truth is quiet, and a quiet style should be our principal aim. And yet Lord Morley himself can at times break out into passages which for chaste and restrained beauty cannot be well surpassed. Take, for instance, his description of "the indefinable charm that haunts the grey and venerable quadrangles of Oxford and Cambridge, . . . the stately halls, the silent and venerable libraries, the solemn chapels, the studious old-world gardens. . . . all those elevated memorials and sanctifying associations of scholars and poets,

of saints and sages, that march in glorious procession through the ages and make Oxford and Cambridge a dream of music for the inward ear, and of delight for the contemplative eye." Or take the noble words which he addressed to the students of Birmingham. "We cannot, like Beethoven or Handel, lift the soul by the magic of divine melody into the seventh heaven of ineffable vision and hope incommensurable; we cannot, like Newton, weigh the far-off stars in a balance, and measure the heavings of the eternal flood; we cannot, like Voltaire, scorch up what is cruel and false by a word as a flame, nor like Milton or Burke, awaken men's hearts with the note of an organ trumpet. . . . But what we can do—the humblest of us in this great hall—is by diligently using our own minds and diligently seeking to extend our own opportunities to others, to help to swell that common tide, on the force and set of whose currents depends the prosperous voyaging of humanity. When our names are blotted out and our place knows us no more, the energy of each social service will remain, like the unending stream of one of Nature's forces. The thought that this is so may well lighten the poor perplexities of our daily life, and even soothe the pang of its calamities; it lifts us from our feet as on wings, opening a larger meaning to our public endeavour; it makes the morning as we awake to it welcome, and the evening like a soft garment as it wraps us about; it nerves our arm with boldness against oppression and injustice and strengthens our voice with deeper accents against falsehood, while we are yet in the full noon

of our days—yes, and perhaps it will shed some ray of consolation, when our eyes are growing dim to it all, and we go down into the Valley of the Dark Shadow."

But enough has been said to indicate the chief characteristics of the man and his work. His must indeed be an unresponsive heart, who can arise from the reading of these essays, with all their wise and generous sentiments, all their wide experience of life and deep knowledge of men and books, without having caught from them at least some faint echo of the nobility of thought and sincerity of purpose of him whom the greatest of Indian statesmen spoke of as "the disciple of Mill, the reverent student of Burke, the friend and biographer of Gladstone."

ON POPULAR CULTURE

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE TOWN HALL, BIRMIMGHAM (OCTOBER 5, 1876), BY THE WRITER, AS PRESIDENT OF THE MIDLAND INSTITUTE

THE proceedings which have now been brought satisfactorily to an end are of a kind which nobody who has sensibility as well as sense can take a part in without some emotion. An illustrious French philosopher who happened to be an examiner of candidates for admission to the Polytechnic School, once confessed that, when a youth came before him eager to do his best, competently taught, and of an apt intelligence, he needed all his self-control to press back the tears from his eyes. Well, when we think how much industry, patience, and intelligent discipline; how many hard hours of self-denying toil; how many temptations to worthless pleasures resisted; how much steadfast feeling for things that are honest and true and of good report—are all represented by the young men and young women to whom I have had the honour of giving your prizes to-night, we must all feel our hearts warmed and gladdened in generous sympathy with so much excellence, so many good hopes, and so honourable a display of those qualities

which make life better worth having for ourselves, and are so likely to make the world better worth living in for those who are to come after us.

If a prize-giving is always an occasion of lively satisfaction, my own satisfaction is all the greater at this moment, because your Institute, which is doing such good work in the world, and is in every respect so prosperous and so flourishing, is the creation of the people of your own district, without subsidy and without direction either from London, or from Oxford, or from Cambridge, or from any other centre whatever. Nobody in this town at any rate needs any argument of mine to persuade him that we can only be sure of advancing all kinds of knowledge, and developing our national life in all its plenitude and variety, on condition of multiplying these local centres both of secondary and higher education, and encouraging each of them to fight its own battle, and do its work in its own way. For my own part I look with the utmost dismay at the concentration, not only of population, but of the treasures of instruction, in our vast city on the banks of the Thames. At Birmingham, as I am informed, one has not far to look for an example of this. One of the branches of your multifarious trades in this town is the manufacture of jewellery. Some of it is said commonly to be wanting in taste, elegance, skill; though some of it also—if I am not misinformed—is good enough to be passed off at Rome and at Paris, even to connoisseurs, as of Roman or French production. Now the nation possesses a most superb collection of all that is excellent and beautiful in jeweller's work. When

I say that the nation possesses it, I mean that London possesses it. The University of Oxford, by the way, has also purchased a portion, but that is not at present accessible. If one of your craftsmen in that kind wants to profit by these admirable models, he must go to London. What happens is that he goes to the capital and stays there. Its superficial attractions are too strong for him. You lose a clever workman and a citizen, and he adds one more atom to that huge, overgrown, and unwieldy community. Now, why, in the name of common sense, should not a portion of the Castellani collection pass six months of the year in Birmingham, the very place of all others where it is most likely to be of real service, and to make an effective mark on the national taste? [1]

[1] Sir Henry Cole, C.B., writes to the *Times* (Oct. 13) on this suggestion as follows:—"In justice to the Lords President of the Council on Education, I hope you will allow me the opportunity of stating that from 1855 the Science and Art Department has done its very utmost to induce schools of art to receive deposits of works of art for study and popular examination, and to circulate its choicest objects useful to manufacturing industry. In corroboration of this assertion, please turn to p. 435 of the twenty-second Report of the Department, just issued. You will there find that upwards of 26,907 objects of art, besides 23,911 paintings and drawings, have been circulated since 1855, and in some cases have been left for several months for exhibition in the localities. They have been seen by more than 6,000,000 of visitors, besides having been copied by students, etc., and the localities have taken the great sum of £116,182 for showing them.

"The Department besides has tried every efficient means to induce other public institutions, which are absolutely choked with superfluous specimens, to concur in a general principle of circulating the nation's works of art, but without success.

"The chief of our national storehouses of works of art actually

To pass on to the more general remarks which you are accustomed to expect from the President of the Institute on this occasion. When I consulted one of your townsmen as to the subject which he thought would be most useful and most interesting to you, he said: "Pray talk about anything you please, if it is only not Education." There is a saying that there are two kinds of foolish people in the world, those who give advice, and those who do not take it. My friend and I in this matter represent these two interesting divisions of the race, for in spite of what he said, it is upon Education after all that I propose to offer you some short observations. You will believe it no affectation on my part, when I say that I shall do so with the sincerest willingness to be corrected by those of wider practical experience in teaching. I am well aware, too, that I have very little that is new to say, but education is one of those matters on which much that has already been said will long bear saying over and over again.

I have been looking through the Report of your classes, and two things have rather struck me, which I will mention. One of them is the very large attendance in the French classes. This appears a singularly satisfactory thing, because you could scarcely do a hard-working man of whatever class a greater service

repudiates the idea that its objects are collected for purposes of education, and declares that they are only 'things rare and curious,' the very reverse of what common sense says they are.

"Further, the Department, to tempt Schools of Art to acquire objects permanently for art museums attached to them, offered a grant in aid of 50 per cent of the cost price of the objects."

than to give him easy access to French literature. Montesquieu used to say that he had never known a pain or a distress which he could not soothe by half an hour of a good book; and perhaps it is no more of an exaggeration to say that a man who can read French with comfort need never have a dull hour. Our own literature has assuredly many a kingly name. In boundless riches and infinite imaginative variety, there is no rival to Shakespeare in the world; in energy and height and majesty Milton and Burke have no masters. But besides its great men of this loftier sort, France has a long list of authors who have produced a literature whose chief mark is its agreeableness. As has been so often said, the genius of the French language is its clearness, firmness, and order; to this clearness certain circumstances in the history of French society have added the delightful qualities of liveliness in union with urbanity. Now as one of the most important parts of popular education is to put people in the way of amusing and refreshing themselves in a rational rather than an irrational manner, it is a great gain to have given them the key to the most amusing and refreshing set of books in the world.

And here, perhaps, I may be permitted to remark that it seems a pity that Racine is so constantly used as a school-book, instead of some of the moderns who are nearer to ourselves in ideas and manners. Racine is a great and admirable writer; but what you want for ordinary readers who have not much time, and whose faculties of attention are already largely exhausted by the more important industry of the day,

is a book which brings literature more close to actual life than such a poet as Racine does. This is exactly one of the gifts and charms of modern French. To put what I mean very shortly, I would say, by way of illustration, that a man who could read the essays of Ste. Beuve with moderate comfort would have in his hands—of course I am now speaking of the active and busy part of the world, not of bookmen and students—would, I say, have in his hands one of the very best instruments that I can think of ; such work is exquisite and instructive in itself, it is a model of gracious writing, it is full of ideas, it breathes the happiest moods over us, and it is the most suggestive of guides, for those who have the capacity of extensive interests, to all the greater spheres of thought and history.

This word brings me back to the second fact that has struck me in your Report, and it is this. The subject of English history has apparently so little popularity, that the class is as near being a failure as anything connected with the Midland Institute can be. On the whole, whatever may be the ability and the zeal of the teacher, this is in my humble judgment neither very surprising nor particularly mortifying, if we think what history in the established conception of it means. How are we to expect workmen to make their way through constitutional antiquities, through the labyrinthine shifts of party intrigue at home, and through the entanglements of intricate diplomacy abroad—" shallow village tales," as Emerson calls them ? These studies are fit enough for professed students of the special subject, but such

exploration is for the ordinary run of men and women impossible, and I do not know that it would lead them into very fruitful lands even if it were easy. You know what the great Duke of Marlborough said: that he had learnt all the history he ever knew out of Shakespeare's historical plays. I have long thought that if we persuaded those classes who have to fight their own little Battles of Blenheim for bread every day, to make such a beginning of history as is furnished by Shakespeare's plays and Scott's novels, we should have done more to imbue them with a real interest in the past of mankind, than if we had taken them through a course of Hume and Smollett, or Hallam on the English Constitution, or even the dazzling Macaulay. What I for one should like to see in such an institution as this, would be an attempt to compress the whole history of England into a dozen or fifteen lectures—lectures of course accompanied by catechetical instruction. I am not so extravagant as to dream that a short general course of this kind would be enough to go over so many of the details as it is desirable for men to know, but details in popular instruction, though not in study of the writer or the university professor, are only important after you have imparted the largest general truths. It is the general truths that stir a life-like curiosity as to the particulars which they are the means of lighting up. Now this short course would be quite enough to present in a bold outline—and it need not be a whit the less true and real for being both bold and rapid—the great chains of events and the decisive movements that have made of ourselves and our

institutions what we and what they are—the Teutonic beginnings, the Conquest, the Great Charter, the Hundred Years' War, the Reformation, the Civil Wars and the Revolution, the Emancipation of the American Colonies from the Monarchy. If this course were framed and filled in with a true social intelligence—men would find that they had at the end of it a fair idea—an idea that might be of great value, and at any rate an idea much to be preferred to that blank ignorance which is in so many cases practically the only alternative—of the large issues of our past, of the antagonistic principles that strove with one another for mastery, of the chief material forces and moral currents of successive ages, and above all of those great men and our fathers that begat us—the Pyms, the Hampdens, the Cromwells, the Chathams —yes, and shall we not say the Washingtons—to whose sagacity, bravery, and unquenchable ardour for justice and order and equal laws all our English-speaking peoples owe a debt that can never be paid.

Another point is worth thinking of, besides the reduction of history for your purposes to a comprehensive body of rightly grouped generalities. Dr. Arnold says somewhere that he wishes the public might have a history of our present state of society *traced backwards*. It is the present that really interests us; it is the present that we seek to understand and to explain. I do not in the least want to know what happened in the past, except as it enables me to see my way more clearly through what is happening to-day. I want to know what men thought and did in the thirteenth century, not out of any dilettante or

idle antiquarian's curiosity, but because the thirteenth century is at the root of what men think and do in the nineteenth. Well then, it cannot be a bad educational rule to start from what is most interesting, and to work from that outwards and backwards. By beginning with the present we see more clearly what are the two things best worth attending to in history —not party intrigues nor battles nor dynastic affairs, nor even many acts of parliament, but the great movements of the economic forces of a society on the one hand, and on the other the forms of religious opinion and ecclesiastical organisation. All the rest are important, but their importance is subsidiary.

Allow me to make one more remark on this subject. If a dozen or a score of wise lectures would suffice for a general picture of the various phases through which our own society has passed, there ought to be added to the course of popular instruction as many lectures more, which should trace the history, not of England, but of the world. And the history of the world ought to go before the history of England. This is no paradox, but the deliberate opinion of many of those who have thought most deeply about the far-reaching chain of human progress. When I was on a visit to the United States some years ago—things may have improved since then—I could not help noticing that the history classes in their common schools all began their work with the year 1776, when the American colonies formed themselves into an independent confederacy. The teaching assumed that the creation of the universe occurred

about that date. What could be more absurd, more narrow and narrowing, more mischievously misleading as to the whole purport and significance of history? As if the laws, the representative institutions, the religious uses, the scientific methods, the moral ideas, which give to an American citizen his character and mental habits and social surroundings, had not all their roots in the deeds and thoughts of wise and brave men, who lived in centuries which are of course just as much the inheritance of the vast continent of the West as they are of the little island from whence its first colonisers sailed forth.

Well, there is something nearly as absurd, if not quite, in our common plan of taking for granted that people should begin their reading of history, not in 1776, but in 1066. As if this could bring into our minds what is after all the greatest lesson of history, namely, the fact of its oneness; of the interdependence of all the elements that have in the course of long ages made the European of to-day what we see him to be. It is no doubt necessary for clear and definite comprehension to isolate your phenomenon, and to follow the stream of our own history separately. But that cannot be enough. We must also see that this stream is the effluent of a far broader and mightier flood—whose springs and sources and great tributaries lay higher up in the history of mankind.

"We are learning," says Mr. Freeman, whose little book on the *Unity of History* I cannot be wrong in warmly recommending even to the busiest among you, "that European history, from its first glimmerings to our own day, is one unbroken drama, no part

of which can be rightly understood without reference to the other parts which come before and after it. We are learning that of this great drama Rome is the centre, the point to which all roads lead and from which all roads lead no less. The world of independent Greece stands on one side of it; the world of modern Europe stands on another. But the history alike of the great centre itself, and of its satellites on either side, can never be fully grasped except from a point of view wide enough to take in the whole group, and to mark the relations of each of its members to the centre and to one another."

Now the counsel which our learned historian thus urges upon the scholar and the leisured student equally represents the point of view which is proper for the more numerous classes of whom we are thinking to-night. The scale will have to be reduced; all save the very broadest aspects of things will have to be left out; none save the highest ranges and the streams of most copious volume will find a place in that map. Small as is the scale and many as are its omissions, yet if a man has intelligently followed the very shortest course of universal history, it will be the fault of his teacher if he has not acquired an impressive conception, which will never be effaced, of the destinies of man upon the earth; of the mighty confluence of forces working on from age to age, which have their meeting in every one of us here to-night; of the order in which each state of society has followed its foregoer, according to great and changeless laws "embracing all things and all times"; of the thousand faithful hands that have one after another,

each in their several degrees, orders, and capacities, trimmed the silver lamp of knowledge and kept its sacred flame bright from generation to generation and age to age, now in one land and now in another, from its early spark among far-off dim Chaldeans down to Goethe and Faraday and Darwin and all the other good workers of our own day.

The shortest course of universal history will let him see how he owes to the Greek civilisation, on the shores of the Mediterranean two thousand years back, a debt extending from the architectural forms of this very Town Hall to some of the most systematic operations of his own mind; will let him see the forum of Rome, its roads and its gates—

> What conflux issuing forth or entering in,
> Prætors, Proconsuls to their provinces
> Hasting or on return, in robes of state—

all busily welding an empire together in a marvellous framework of citizenship, manners, and laws, that laid assured foundations for a still higher civilisation that was to come after. He will learn how when the Roman Empire declined, then at Damascus and Bagdad and Seville the Mahometan conquerors took up the torch of science and learning, and handed it on to western Europe when the new generations were ready. He will learn how in the meantime, during ages which we both wrongly and ungratefully call dark, from Rome again, that other great organisation, the mediæval Church, had arisen, which amid many imperfections and some crimes did a work that no

glory of physical science can equal, and no instrument of physical science can compass, in purifying men's appetites, in setting discipline and direction on their lives, and in offering to humanity new types of moral obligation and fairer ideals of saintly perfection, whose light still shines like a star to guide our own poor voyages. It is only by this contemplation of the life of our race as a whole that men see the beginnings and the ends of things; learn not to be near-sighted in history, but to look before and after; see their own part and lot in the rising up and going down of empires and faiths since first recorded time began; and what I am contending for is that even if you can take your young men and women no farther than the mere vestibule of this ancient and ever venerable Temple of many marvels, you will have opened to them the way to a kind of knowledge that not only enlightens the understanding, but enriches the character—which is a higher thing than mere intellect—and makes it constantly alive with the spirit of beneficence.

I know it is said that such a view of collective history is true, but that you will never get plain people to respond to it; it is a thing for intellectual dilettanti and moralising virtuosi. Well, we do not know, because we have never yet honestly tried, what the commonest people will or will not respond to. When Sir Richard Wallace's pictures were being exhibited at Bethnal Green, after people had said that the workers had no souls for art and would not appreciate its treasures, a story is told of a female in very poor clothes gazing intently at a picture of

the Infant Jesus in the arms of his Mother, and then exclaiming, "*Who would not try to be a good woman, who had such a child as that?*" We have never yet, I say, tried the height and pitch to which our people are capable of rising.

I have thought it well to take this opportunity of saying a word for history, because I cannot help thinking that one of the most narrow, and what will eventually be one of the most impoverishing, characteristics of our day is the excessive supremacy claimed for physical science. This is partly due, no doubt, to a most wholesome reaction against the excessive supremacy that has hitherto been claimed for literature, and held by literature, in our schools and universities. At the same time, it is well to remember that the historic sciences are making strides not unworthy of being compared with those of the physical sciences, and not only is there room for both, but any system is radically wrong which excludes or depresses either to the advantage of the other.[1]

And now there is another idea which I should like to throw out, if you will not think it too tedious and too special. It is an old saying that, after all, the

[1] A very eminent physicist writes to me on this passage: "I cannot help smiling when I think of the place of physical science in the endowed schools," etc. My reference was to the great prevalence of such assertions as that human progress depends upon increase of our knowledge of the conditions of material phenomena (Dr. Draper, for instance, lays this down as a fundamental axiom of history): as if moral advance, the progressive elevation of types of character and ethical ideals were not at least an equally important cause of improvement in civilisation. The type of Saint Vincent de Paul is plainly as indispensable to progress as the type of Newton.

great end and aim of the British Constitution is to get twelve honest men into a box. That is really a very sensible way of putting the theory, that the first end of government is to give security to life and property, and to make people keep their contracts. But with this view it is not only important that you should get twelve honest men into a box: the twelve honest men must have in their heads some notions as to what constitutes Evidence. Now it is surely a striking thing that while we are so careful to teach physical science and literature; while men want to be endowed in order to have leisure to explore our spinal cords, and to observe the locomotor system of Medusæ—and I have no objection against those who urge on all these studies—yet there is no systematic teaching, very often no teaching at all, in the principles of Evidence and Reasoning, even for the bulk of those who would be very much offended if we were to say that they are not educated. Of course I use the term evidence in a wider sense than the testimony in crimes and contracts, and the other business of courts of law. Questions of evidence are rising at every hour of the day. As Bentham says, it is a question of evidence with the cook whether the joint of meat is roasted enough. It has been excellently said that the principal and most characteristic difference between one human intellect and another consists in their ability to judge correctly of evidence. Most of us, Mr. Mill says, are very unsafe hands at estimating evidence, if appeal cannot be made to actual eyesight. Indeed, if we think of some of the tales that have been lately diverting the British

Association, we might perhaps go farther, and describe many of us as very bad hands at estimating evidence, even where appeal can be made to actual eyesight. Eyesight, in fact, is the least part of the matter. The senses are as often the tools as the guides of reason. One of the longest chapters in the history of vulgar error would contain the cases in which the eyes have only seen what old prepossessions inspired them to see, and were blind to all that would have been fatal to the prepossessions. "It is beyond all question or dispute," says Voltaire, "that magic words and ceremonies are quite capable of most effectually destroying a whole flock of sheep, if the words be accompanied by a sufficient quantity of arsenic." Sorcery has no doubt been exploded—at least we assume that it has—but the temper that made men attribute all the efficacy to the magic words, and entirely overlook the arsenic, still prevails in a great host of moral and political affairs, into which it is not convenient to enter here. The stability of a government, for instance, is constantly set down to some ornamental part of it, when in fact the ornamental part has no more to do with stability than the incantations of the soothsayer.

You have heard, again, that for many generations the people of the Isle of St. Kilda believed that the arrival of a ship in the harbour inflicted on the islanders epidemic colds in the head, and many ingenious reasons were from time to time devised by clever men why the ship should cause colds among the population. At last it occurred to somebody that the ship might not be the cause of the colds, but that both might be the common effects of some other cause,

and it was then remembered that a ship could only enter the harbour when there was a strong north-east wind blowing.

However faithful the observation, as soon as ever a man uses words he may begin at that moment to go wrong. "A village apothecary," it has been said, "and if possible in a still greater degree, an experienced nurse, is seldom able to describe the plainest case without employing a phraseology of which every word is a theory; the simplest narrative of the most illiterate observer involves more or less of hypothesis;" —yet both by the observer himself and by most of those who listen to him, each of these conjectural assumptions is treated as respectfully as if it were an established axiom. We are supposed to deny the possibility of a circumstance, when in truth we only deny the evidence alleged for it. We allow the excellence of reasoning from certain data to captivate our belief in the truth of the data themselves, even when they are unproved and unprovable. There is no end, in short, of the ways in which men habitually go wrong in their reasoning, tacit or expressed. The greatest boon that any benefactor could confer on the human race would be to teach men—and especially women—to quantify their propositions. It sometimes seems as if Swift were right when he said that Mankind were just as fit for flying as for thinking.

Now it is quite true that mother-wit and the common experiences of life do often furnish people with a sort of shrewd and sound judgment that carries them very creditably through the world. They come to good conclusions, though perhaps they would give

bad reasons for them, if they were forced to find their reasons. But you cannot count upon mother-wit in everybody; perhaps not even in a majority. And then as for the experience of life,—there are a great many questions, and those of the deepest ultimate importance to mankind, in which the ordinary experience of life sheds no light, until it has been interrogated and interpreted by men with trained minds. "It is far easier," as has been said, "to acquire facts than to judge what they prove." What is done in our systems of training to teach people how to judge what facts prove? There is Mathematics, no doubt; anybody who has done even no more than the first book of Euclid's geometry, ought to have got into his head the notion of a demonstration, of the rigorously close connection between a conclusion and its premisses, of the necessity of being able to show how each link in the chain comes to be where it is, and that it has a right to be there. This, however, is a long way from the facts of real life, and a man might well be a great geometer, and still be a thoroughly bad reasoner in practical questions.

Again, in other of your classes, in Chemistry, in Astronomy, in Natural History, besides acquiring groups of facts, the student has a glimpse of the method by which they were discovered, of the type of inference to which the discovery conforms, so that the discovery of a new comet, the detection of a new species, the invention of a new chemical compound, each becomes a lesson of the most beautiful and impressive kind in the art of reasoning. And it would be superfluous and impertinent for me here to

point out how valuable such lessons are in the way of mental discipline, apart from the fruit they bear in other ways. But here again the relation to the judgments we have to form in the moral, political, practical sphere, is too remote and too indirect. The judgments, in this region, of the most brilliant and successful explorers in physical science, seem to be exactly as liable to every kind of fallacy as those of other people. The application of scientific method and conception to society is yet in its infancy, and the *Novum Organum* or the *Principia* of moral and social phenomena will perhaps not be wholly disclosed to any of us now alive. In any case it is clear that for the purposes of such an institution as this, if the rules of evidence and proof and all the other safeguards for making your propositions true and relevant, are to be taught at all, they must be taught not only in an elementary form, but with illustrations that shall convey their own direct reference and application to practical life. If everybody could find time to master Mill's *Logic* or so instructive and interesting a book as Professor Jevons's *Principles of Science*, a certain number at any rate of the bad mental habits of people would be cured; and for those of you here who have leisure enough, and want to find a worthy keystone of your culture, it would be hard to find a better thing to do for the next six months than to work through one or both of the books I have just named —pen in hand. The ordinary text-books of formal logic do not seem to meet the special aim which I am now trying to impress as desirable—namely, the habit of valuing, not merely speculative nor scientific truth,

but the truth of practical life; a practising of the intellect in forming and expressing the opinions and judgments that form the staple of our daily discourse.

It is now accepted that the most effective way of learning a foreign language is to begin by reading books written in it, or by conversing in it—and then after a certain empirical familiarity with vocabulary and construction has been acquired, one may proceed to master the grammar. Just in the same way it would seem to be the best plan to approach the art of practical reasoning in concrete examples, in cases of actual occurrence and living interest; and then after the process of disentangling a complex group of propositions, of dividing and sifting, of scenting a fallacy, have all become familiar, it may be worth while to find names for them all, and to set out rules for reasoning rightly, just as in the former illustration the rules of writing correctly follow a certain practice rather than precede it.

Now it has long seemed to me that the best way of teaching carefulness and precision in dealing with propositions might be found through the medium of the argumentation in the courts of justice. This is reasoning in real matter. There is a famous book well known to legal students—*Smith's Leading Cases*—which contains a selection of important decisions, and sets forth the grounds on which the courts arrived at them. I have often thought that a dozen or a score of cases might be collected from this book into a small volume, that would make such a manual as no other matter could, for opening plain men's eyes to the

logical pitfalls among which they go stumbling and crashing, when they think they are disputing like Socrates or reasoning like Newton. They would see how a proposition or an expression that looks straightforward and unmistakable, is yet on examination found to be capable of bearing several distinct interpretations and meaning several distinct things; how the same evidence may warrant different conclusions, and what kinds of evidence carry with them what degrees of validity: how certain sorts of facts can only be proved in one way, and certain other sorts of facts in some other way: how necessary it is, before you set out, to know exactly what it is you intend to show, or what it is you intend to dispute; how there may be many argumentative objections to a proposition, yet the balance be in favour of its adoption. It is from the generality of people having neglected to practise the attention on these and the like matters, that interest and prejudice find so ready an instrument of sophistry in that very art of speech which ought to be the organ of reason and truth. To bring the matter to a point, then, I submit that it might be worth while in this and all such institutions to have a class for the study of Logic, Reasoning, Evidence, and that such a class might well find its best material in selections from Leading Cases, and from Bentham's *Rationale of Judicial Evidence*, elucidated by those special sections in Mill's *Logic*, or smaller manuals such as those of Mr. Fowler, the Oxford Professor of Logic, which treat of the department of Fallacies. Perhaps Bentham's *Book of Fallacies* is too political for me to commend it to you here. But if there

happens to be any one in Birmingham who is fond of meeting proposed changes by saying that they are Utopian; that they are good in theory, but bad in practice; that they are too good to be realised, and so forth, then I can promise him that he will in that book hear of something very much to his advantage.[1]

An incidental advantage—which is worth mentioning—of making legal instances the medium of instruction in practical logic, would be that people would—not learn law, of course, in the present state of our system, but they would have their attention called in a direct and business-like way to the lawyer's point of view, and those features of procedure in which every man and woman in the land has so immediate an interest. Perhaps if people interested themselves more seriously than is implied by reading famous cases in the newspapers, we should get rid, for one thing, of the rule which makes the accused person in a criminal case incompetent to testify; and, for another, of that infamous license of cross-examination to credit, which is not only barbarous to those who have to submit to it, but leads to constant miscarriage

[1] This suggestion has fortunately found favour in a quarter where shrewd and critical common sense is never wanting. The *Economist* (Oct. 14) writes:—"Such a text-book commented on to a class by a man trained to estimate the value of evidence, would form a most valuable study, and not, we should imagine, at all less fascinating than valuable. Of course the class suggested would not be a class in English law, but in the principles on which evidence should be estimated, and the special errors to which, in common life, average minds are most liable. We regard this suggestion as a most useful one, and as one which would not only greatly contribute to the educational worth of an institute for adults, but also to its popularity."

of justice in the case of those who, rather than submit to it, will suffer wrong.

It will be said, I daresay, that overmuch scruple about our propositions and the evidence for them will reduce men, especially the young, to the intellectual condition of the great philosopher, Marphurius, in Molière's comedy. Marphurius rebukes Sganarelle for saying he had come into the room ;—" What you should say is, that it *seems* I am come into the room." Instead of the downright affirmations and burly negations so becoming to Britons, he would bring down all our propositions to the attenuation of a possibility or a perhaps. We need not fear such an end. The exigencies of practical affairs will not allow this endless balancing. They are always driving men to the other extreme, making us like the new judge, who first heard the counsel on one side and made up his mind on the merits of the case, until the turn of the opposing counsel came, and then the new counsel filled the judge with so many doubts and perplexities, that he suddenly vowed that nothing would induce him to pay any heed to evidence again as long as he lived.

I do not doubt that I shall be blamed in what I have said about French, and about history, for encouraging a spirit of superficiality, and of contentment with worthless smatterings of things. To this I should answer that, as Archbishop Whately pointed out long ago, it is a fallacy to mistake general truths for superficial truths, or a knowledge of the leading propositions of a subject for a superficial knowledge. " To have a general knowledge of a subject is to know

only its leading truths, but to know these thoroughly, so as to have a true conception of the subject in its great features" (*Mill*). And I need not point out that instruction may be of the most general kind, and still possess that most important quality of all instruction—namely, being *methodical.*

I think popular instruction has been made much more repulsive than it need have been, and more repulsive than it ought to have been, because those who have had the control of the movement for the last fifty years, have been too anxious to make the type of popular instruction conform to the type of academic instruction proper to learned men. The principles of instruction have been too rigorously ascetic and puritanical, and instead of making the access to knowledge as easy as possible, we have delighted in forcing every pilgrim to make his journey to the shrine of the Muses with a hair-shirt on his back and peas in his shoes. Nobody would say that Macaulay had a superficial knowledge of the things best worth knowing in ancient literature, yet we have his own confession that when he became a busy man —as you are all busy—then he read his classics, not like a collegian, but like a man of the world; if he did not know a word, he passed it over, and if a passage refused to give up its meaning at the second reading, then he let it alone. Now the aims of academic education and those of popular education are—it is obvious if you come to think of it—quite different. The end of the one is rather to increase knowledge: of the other to diffuse it, and to increase

men's interest in what is already known. If, therefore, I am for making certain kinds of instruction as general as they can possibly be made in these local centres, I should give to the old seats of learning a very special function indeed.

It would be absurd to attempt to discuss academic organisation here, at this hour. I only want to ask you as politicians whose representatives in parliament will ultimately settle the matter—to reflect whether the money now consumed in idle fellowships might not be more profitably employed in endowing inquirers. The favourite argument of those who support prize fellowships is that they are the only means by which a child of the working-class can raise himself to the highest positions in the land. My answer to this would be that, in the first place, it is of questionable expediency to invite the cleverest members of any class to leave it—instead of making their abilities available in it, and so raising the whole class along with, and by means of, their own rise. Second, these prize fellowships will continue, and must continue, to be carried off by those who can afford time and money to educate their sons for the competition. Third, I doubt the expediency—and the history of Oxford within the last twenty-five years strikingly confirms this doubt—of giving to a young man of any class what is practically a premium on indolence, and the removal of a motive to self-reliant and energetic spirit of enterprise. The best thing that I can think of as happening to a young man is this: that he should have been educated at a day-school in his own town; that he should have

opportunities of following also the higher education in his own town; and that at the earliest convenient time he should be taught to earn his own living.

The Universities might then be left to their proper business of study. Knowledge for its own sake is clearly an object which only a very small portion of society can be spared to pursue; only a very few men in a generation have that devouring passion for knowing, which is the true inspirer of fruitful study and exploration. Even if the passion were more common than it is, the world could not afford on any very large scale that men should indulge in it: the great business of the world has to be carried on. One of the greatest of all hindrances to making things better is the habit of taking for granted that plans or ideas, simply because they are different and approach the matter from different sides, are therefore the rivals and enemies, instead of being the friends and complements of one another. But a great and wealthy society like ours ought very well to be able to nourish one or two great seats for the augmentation of true learning, and at the same time make sure that young men—and again I say, especially young women—should have good education of the higher kind within reach of their own hearths.

It is not necessary for me here, I believe, to dwell upon any of the great commonplaces which the follower of knowledge does well to keep always before his eyes, and which represent the wisdom of many generations of studious experience. You may have often heard from others, or may have found out,

how good it is to have on your shelves, however scantily furnished they may be, three or four of those books to which it is well to give ten minutes every morning, before going down into the battle and choking dust of the day. Men will name these books for themselves. One will choose the Bible, another Goethe, one the *Imitation of Christ*, another Wordsworth. Perhaps it matters little what it be, so long as your writer has cheerful seriousness, elevation, calm, and, above all, a sense of size and strength, which shall open out the day before you and bestow gifts of fortitude and mastery.

Then, to turn to the intellectual side. You know as well as I or any one can tell you, that knowledge is worth little until you have made it so perfectly your own, as to be capable of reproducing it in precise and definite form. Goethe said that in the end we only retain of our studies, after all, what we practically employ of them. And it is at least well that in our serious studies we should have the possibility of practically turning them to a definite destination clearly before our eyes. Nobody can be sure that he has got clear ideas on a subject, unless he has tried to put them down on a piece of paper in independent words of his own. It is an excellent plan, too, when you have read a good book, to sit down and write a short abstract of what you can remember of it. It is a still better plan, if you can make up your minds to a slight extra labour, to do what Lord Strafford, and Gibbon, and Daniel Webster did. After glancing over the title, subject, or design of a book, these eminent men would take a pen and write roughly what questions

they expected to find answered in it, what difficulties solved, what kind of information imparted. Such practices keep us from reading with the eye only, gliding vaguely over the page; and they help us to *place* our new acquisitions in relation with what we knew before. It is almost always worth while to read a thing twice over, to make sure that nothing has been missed or dropped on the way, or wrongly conceived or interpreted. And if the subject be serious, it is often well to let an interval elapse. Ideas, relations, statements of fact, are not to be taken by storm. We have to steep them in the mind, in the hope of thus extracting their inmost essence and significance. If one lets an interval pass, and then returns, it is surprising how clear and ripe that has become, which, when we left it, seemed crude, obscure, full of perplexity.

All this takes trouble, no doubt, but then it will not do to deal with ideas that we find in books or elsewhere as a certain bird does with its eggs—leave them in the sand for the sun to hatch and chance to rear. People who follow this plan possess nothing better than ideas half-hatched, and convictions reared by accident. They are like a man who should pace up and down the world in the delusion that he is clad in sumptuous robes of purple and velvet, when in truth he is only half-covered by the rags and tatters of other people's cast-off clothes.

Apart from such mechanical devices as these I have mentioned, there are habits and customary attitudes of mind which a conscientious reader will practise, if he desires to get out of a book still greater

benefits than the writer of it may have designed or thought of. For example, he should never be content with mere aggressive and negatory criticism of the page before him. The page may be open to such criticism, and in that case it is natural to indulge in it; but the reader will often find an unexpected profit by asking himself—What does this error teach me? How comes this fallacy to be here? How came the writer to fall into this defect of taste? To ask such questions gives a reader a far healthier tone of mind in the long run, more seriousness, more depth, more moderation of judgment, more insight into other men's ways of thinking as well as into his own, than any amount of impatient condemnation and hasty denial, even when both condemnation and denial may be in their place.

Again, let us not be too ready to detect an inconsistency in our author, but rather let us teach ourselves to distinguish between inconsistency and having two sides to an opinion. "Before I admit that two and two are four," some one said, "I must first know to what use you are going to put the proposition." That is to say, even the plainest proposition needs to be stated with a view to the drift of the discussion in hand, or with a view to some special part of the discussion. When the turn of some other part of the matter comes, it will be convenient and often necessary to bring out into full light another side of your opinion, not contradictory, but complementary, and the great distinction of a candid disputant or of a reader of good faith, is his willingness to take pains to see the points of reconciliation among different aspects and

different expressions of what is substantially the same judgment.

Then, again, nobody here needs to be reminded that the great successes of the world have been affairs of a second, a third, nay, a fiftieth trial. The history of literature, of science, of art, of industrial achievements, all testify to the truth that success is only the last term of what looked like a series of failures. What is true of the great achievements of history, is true also of the little achievements of the observant cultivator of his own understanding. If a man is despondent about his work, the best remedy that I can prescribe to him is to turn to a good biography; there he will find that other men before him have known the dreary reaction that follows long-sustained effort, and he will find that one of the differences between the first-rate man and the fifth-rate lies in the vigour with which the first-rate man recovers from this reaction, and crushes it down, and again flings himself once more upon the breach. I remember the wisest and most virtuous man I have ever known, or am ever likely to know—Mr. Mill—once saying to me that whenever he had written anything, he always felt profoundly dissatisfied with it, and it was only by reflecting that he had felt the same about other pieces of which the world had thought well, that he could bring himself to send the new production to the printer. The heroism of the scholar and the truth-seeker is not less admirable than the heroism of the man-at-arms.

Finally, you none of you need to be reminded of the most central and important of all the common-

places of the student—that the stuff of which life is made is Time ; that it is better, as Goethe said, to do the most trifling thing in the world than to think half an hour a trifling thing. Nobody means by this that we are to have no pleasures. Where time is lost and wasted is where many people lose and waste their money—in things that are neither pleasure nor business—in those random and officious sociabilities, which neither refresh nor instruct nor invigorate, but only fret and benumb and wear all edge off the mind. All these things, however, you have all of you often thought about ; yet, alas, we are so ready to forget, both in these matters and in other and weightier, how irrevocable are our mistakes.

> The moving Finger writes, and having writ,
> Moves on ; nor all your piety nor wit
> Can lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all your tears wipe out a word of it.

And now I think I cannot ask you to listen any longer. I will only add that these ceremonial anniversaries, when they are over, sometimes slightly tend to depress us, unless we are on our guard. When the prizes of the year are all distributed, and the address is at an end, we perhaps ask ourselves, Well, and what then? It is not to be denied that the expectations of the first fervent promoters of popular instruction by such Institutes as this—of men like Lord Brougham and others, a generation ago—were not fulfilled. The principal reason was that the elementary instruction of the country was not then sufficiently advanced to supply a population ready to

take advantage of education in the higher subjects. Well, we are in a fair way for removing that obstacle. It is true that the old world moves tardily on its arduous way, but even if the results of all our efforts in the cause of education were smaller than they are, there are still two considerations that ought to weigh with us and encourage us.

For one thing, you never know what child in rags and pitiful squalor that meets you in the street, may have in him the germ of gifts that might add new treasures to the storehouse of beautiful things or noble acts. In that great storm of terror which swept over France in 1793, a certain man who was every hour expecting to be led off to the guillotine, uttered this memorable sentiment. "Even at this incomprehensible moment"—he said—"when morality, enlightenment, love of country, all of them only make death at the prison-door or on the scaffold more certain—yes, on the fatal tumbril itself, with nothing free but my voice, I could still cry *Take care*, to a child that should come too near the wheel; perhaps I may save his life, perhaps he may one day save his country." This is a generous and inspiring thought—one to which the roughest-handed man or woman in Birmingham may respond as honestly and heartily as the philosopher who wrote it. It ought to shame the listlessness with which so many of us see the great phantasmagoria of life pass before us.

There is another thought to encourage us, still more direct, and still more positive. The boisterous old notion of hero-worship, which has been preached by so eloquent a voice in our age, is after all now

seen to be a half-truth, and to contain the less edifying and the less profitable half of the truth. The world will never be able to spare its hero, and the man with the rare and inexplicable gift of genius will always be as commanding a figure as he has ever been. What we see every day with increasing clearness is that not only the wellbeing of the many, but the chances of exceptional genius, moral or intellectual, in the gifted few, are highest in a society where the *average* interest, curiosity, capacity, are all highest. The moral of this for you and for me is plain. We cannot, like Beethoven or Handel, lift the soul by the magic of divine melody into the seventh heaven of ineffable vision and hope incommensurable; we cannot, like Newton, weigh the far-off stars in a balance, and measure the heavings of the eternal flood; we cannot, like Voltaire, scorch up what is cruel and false by a word as a flame, nor, like Milton or Burke, awaken men's hearts with the note of an organ-trumpet; we cannot, like the great saints of the churches and the great sages of the schools, add to those acquisitions of spiritual beauty and intellectual mastery which have, one by one, and little by little, raised man from being no higher than the brute to be only a little lower than the angels. But what we can do—the humblest of us in this great hall—is by diligently using our own minds and diligently seeking to extend our own opportunities to others, to help to swell that common tide, on the force and the set of whose currents depends the prosperous voyaging of humanity. When our names are blotted out, and our place knows us no more, the energy of each social

service will remain, and so too, let us not forget, will each social disservice remain, like the unending stream of one of nature's forces. The thought that this is so may well lighten the poor perplexities of our daily life, and even soothe the pang of its calamities; it lifts us from our feet as on wings, opening a larger meaning to our private toil and a higher purpose to our public endeavour; it makes the morning as we awake to it welcome, and the evening like a soft garment as it wraps us about; it nerves our arm with boldness against oppression and injustice, and strengthens our voice with deeper accents against falsehood, while we are yet in the full noon of our days—yes, and perhaps it will shed some ray of consolation, when our eyes are growing dim to it all, and we go down into the Valley of the Dark Shadow.

ON THE STUDY OF LITERATURE[1]

WHEN my friend Mr. Goschen invited me to discharge the duty which has fallen to me this afternoon I confess that I complied with many misgivings. He desired me to say something on the literary side of education. Now, it is almost impossible—and I think those who know most of literature will be readiest to agree with me—to say anything new in recommendation of literature in a scheme of education. I have felt, however, that Mr. Goschen has worked with such zeal and energy for so many years on behalf of this good cause, that anybody whom he considered able to render him any co-operation owed it to him in its fullest extent. The Lord Mayor has been kind enough to say that I am especially qualified to speak on English literature. I must, however, remind the Lord Mayor that I have strayed from literature into the region of politics; and I am not at all sure that such a journey conduces to the aptness of one's judgment on literary subjects, or adds much to the force of one's arguments on behalf of literary study. Politics are a field where action is

[1] The annual address to the students of the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching, delivered at the Mansion House, February 26th, 1887.

one long second-best, and where the choice constantly lies between two blunders. Nothing can be more unlike in aim, in ideals, in method, and in matter, than are literature and politics. I have, however, determined to do the best that I can; and I feel how great an honour it is to be invited to partake in a movement which I do not hesitate to call one of the most important of all those now taking place in English society.

What is the object of the movement? What do the promoters aim at? I take it that what they design is to bring the very best teaching that the country can afford, through the hands of the most thoroughly competent men, within the reach of every class of the community. Their object is to give to the many that sound, systematic, and methodical knowledge, which has hitherto been the privilege of the few who can afford the time and money to go to Oxford and Cambridge; to diffuse the fertilising waters of intellectual knowledge from their great and copious fountain-heads at the Universities by a thousand irrigating channels over the whole length and breadth of our busy, indomitable land. Gentlemen, this is a most important point. Goethe said that nothing is more frightful than a teacher who only knows what his scholars are intended to know. We may depend upon it that the man who knows his own subject most thoroughly is most likely to excite interest about it in the minds of other people. We hear, perhaps more often than we like, that we live in a democratic age. It is true enough, and I can conceive nothing more democratic than such a

movement as this, nothing which is more calculated to remedy defects that are incident to democracy, more thoroughly calculated to raise modern democracy to heights which other forms of government and older orderings of society have never yet attained. No movement can be more wisely democratic than one which seeks to give to the northern miner or the London artisan knowledge as good and as accurate, though he may not have so much of it, as if he were a student at Oxford or Cambridge. Something of the same kind may be said of the new frequency with which scholars of great eminence and consummate accomplishments, like Jowett, Lang, Myers, Leaf, and others, bring all their scholarship to bear, in order to provide for those who are not able, or do not care, to read old classics in the originals, brilliant and faithful renderings of them in our own tongue. Nothing but good, I am persuaded, can come of all these attempts to connect learning with the living forces of society, and to make industrial England a sharer in the classic tradition of the lettered world.

I am well aware that there is an apprehension that the present extraordinary zeal for education in all its forms—elementary, secondary, and higher—may bear in its train some evils of its own. It is said that before long nobody in England will be content to practise a handicraft, and that every one will insist on being at least a clerk. It is said that the moment is even already at hand when a great deal of practical distress does and must result from this tendency. I remember years ago that in the United States I heard something of the same kind. All I

can say is, that this tendency, if it exists, is sure to right itself. In no case can the spread of so mischievous a notion as that knowledge and learning ought not to come within reach of handicraftsmen be attributed to literature. There is a familiar passage in which Pericles, the great Athenian, describing the glory of the community of which he was so far-shining a member, says, "We at Athens are lovers of the beautiful, yet simple in our tastes; we cultivate the mind without loss of manliness." But then, remember that after all Athenian society rested on a basis of slavery. Athenian citizens were able to pursue their love of the beautiful, and their simplicity, and to cultivate their minds without loss of manliness, because the drudgery and hard work and rude service of society were performed by those who had no share in all these good things. With us, happily, it is very different. We are all more or less upon a level. Our object is—and it is that which in my opinion raises us infinitely above the Athenian level—to bring the Periclean ideas of beauty and simplicity and cultivation of the mind within the reach of those who do the drudgery and the service and rude work of the world. And it can be done—do not let us be afraid—it can be done without in the least degree impairing the skill of our handicraftsmen or the manliness of our national life. It can be done without blunting or numbing the practical energies of our people.

I know they say that if you meddle with literature you are less qualified to take your part in practical affairs. You run a risk of being labelled a dreamer

and a theorist. But, after all, if we take the very highest form of all practical energy—the governing of the country—all this talk is ludicrously untrue. I venture to say that in the present Government [1887], including the Prime Minister, there are three men at least who are perfectly capable of earning their bread as men of letters. In the late Government, besides the Prime Minister, there were also three men of letters, and I have never heard that those three were greater simpletons than their neighbours. There is a Commission now at work on that very important and abstruse subject—the Currency. I am told that no one there displays so acute an intelligence of the difficulties that are to be met, and so ready an apprehension of the important arguments that are brought forward, and the practical ends to be achieved, as the chairman of the Commission, who is not what is called a practical man, but a man of study, literature, theoretical speculation, and university training.[1] Oh no, gentlemen, some of the best men of business in the country are men who have had the best collegian's equipment, and are the most accomplished bookmen.

It is true that we cannot bring to London, with this movement, the indefinable charm that haunts the grey and venerable quadrangles of Oxford and Cambridge. We cannot take you into the stately halls, the silent and venerable libraries, the solemn chapels, the studious old-world gardens. We cannot surround you with all those elevated memorials and sanctifying associations of scholars and poets,

[1] Mr. Arthur Balfour.

of saints and sages, that march in glorious procession through the ages, and make of Oxford and Cambridge a dream of music for the inward ear, and of delight for the contemplative eye. We cannot bring all that to you; but I hope, and I believe, it is the object of those who are more intimately connected with the society than I have been, that every partaker of the benefits of this society will feel himself and herself in living connection with those two famous centres, and feel conscious of the links that bind the modern to the older England. One of the most interesting facts mentioned in your report this year is that last winter four prizes of £10 each were offered in the mining district of Northumberland, one each to the male and female student in every term who should take the highest place in the examination, in order to enable them to spend a month in Cambridge in the long vacation for the purpose of carrying on in the laboratories and museums the work in which they had been engaged in the winter at the local centre. That is not a step taken by our society; but the University of Cambridge has inspired and worked out the scheme, and I am not without hope that from London some of those who attend these classes may be able to realise in person the attractions and the associations of these two great historic sites. One likes to think how poor scholars three or four hundred years ago used to flock to Oxford, regardless of cold, privation, and hardship, so that they might satisfy their hunger and thirst for knowledge. I like to think of them in connection with this movement. I like to think of them in connection with students

like those miners in Northumberland, whom I know well, and who are mentioned in the report of the Cambridge Extension Society as, after a day's hard work in the pit, walking four or five miles through cold and darkness and rough roads to hear a lecture, and then walking back again the same four or five miles. You must look for the same enthusiasm, the same hunger and thirst for knowledge, that presided over the foundation of the Universities many centuries ago, to carry on this work, to strengthen and stimulate men's faith in knowledge, their hopes from it, and their zeal for it.

Speaking now of the particular kind of knowledge of which I am going to say a few words—how does literature fare in these important operations? Last term, out of fifty-seven courses in the Cambridge scheme, there were ten on literature; out of thirty-one of our courses, seven were on literature. I am bound to say I think that such a position for literature in the scheme is very reasonably satisfactory. I have made some inquiries, since I knew that I was going to speak here, in the great popular centres of industry in the North and in Scotland as to the popularity of literature as a subject of teaching. I find very much what I should have expected. The professors all tell very much the same story, and this is that it is extremely hard to interest any considerable number of people in subjects that seem to have no direct bearing upon the practical work of everyday life. There is a disinclination to study literature for its own sake, or to study anything which does not seem to have a visible and direct influence upon the daily

work of life. The nearest approach to a taste for literature is a certain demand for instruction in history with a little flavour of contemporary politics. In short, the demand for instruction in literature is strictly moderate. That is what men of experience tell me, and we have to recognise it, nor ought we to be at all surprised. Mr. Goschen, when he spoke some years ago, said there were three motives which might induce people to seek the higher education. First, to obtain greater knowledge for breadwinning purposes. From that point of view science would be most likely to feed the classes. Secondly, the improvement of one's knowledge of political economy, and history, and facts bearing upon the actual political work and life of the day. Thirdly, was the desire of knowledge as a luxury to brighten life and kindle thought. I am very much afraid that, in the ordinary temper of our people, and the ordinary mode of looking at life, the last of these motives savours a little of self-indulgence, and sentimentality, and other objectionable qualities. There is a great stir in the region of physical science at this moment, and it is likely, as any one may see, to take a chief and foremost place in the field of intellectual activity. After the severity with which science was for so many ages treated by literature, we cannot wonder that science now retaliates, now mightily exalts herself, and thrusts literature down into the lower place. I only have to say on the relative claims of science and literature what Dr. Arnold said:—"If one might wish for impossibilities, I might then wish that my children might be well versed in physical

science, but in due subordination to the fulness and freshness of their knowledge on moral subjects. This, however, I believe cannot be; wherefore, rather than have it the principal thing in my son's mind, I would gladly have him think that the sun went round the earth, and that the stars were so many spangles set in the bright blue firmament" (Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, ii. 31). It is satisfactory that one may know something of these matters, and yet not believe that the sun goes round the earth. But if there is to be exclusion, I, for one, am not prepared to accept the rather enormous pretensions that are nowadays sometimes made for physical science as the be-all and end-all of education.

Next to this we know that there is a great stir on behalf of technical and commercial education. The special needs of our time and country compel us to pay a particular attention to this subject. Here knowledge is business, and we shall never hold our industrial pre-eminence, with all that hangs upon that pre-eminence, unless we push on technical and commercial education with all our might. But there is a third kind of knowledge, and that too, in its own way, is business. There is the cultivation of the sympathies and imagination, the quickening of the moral sensibilities, and the enlargement of the moral vision. The great need in modern culture, which is scientific in method, rationalistic in spirit, and utilitarian in purpose, is to find some effective agency for cherishing within us the ideal. That is the business and function of literature. Literature alone will not make a good citizen; it will not make

a good man. History affords too many proofs that scholarship and learning by no means purge men of acrimony, of vanity, of arrogance, of a murderous tenacity about trifles. Mere scholarship and learning and the knowledge of books do not by any means arrest and dissolve all the travelling acids of the human system. Nor would I pretend for a moment that literature can be any substitute for life and action. Burke said, "What is the education of the generality of the world? Reading a parcel of books? No! Restraint and discipline, examples of virtue and of justice, these are what form the education of the world." That is profoundly true; it is life that is the great educator. But the parcel of books, if they are well chosen, reconcile us to this discipline; they interpret this virtue and justice; they awaken within us the diviner mind, and rouse us to a consciousness of what is best in others and ourselves.

As a matter of rude fact, there is much to make us question whether the spread of literature, as now understood, does awaken the diviner mind. The numbers of the books that are taken out from public libraries are not all that we could wish. I am not going to inflict many figures on you, but there is one set of these figures that distresses booklovers,—I mean the enormous place that fiction occupies in the books that are taken out. In one great town in the North prose fiction forms 76 per cent of all the books lent. In another great town prose fiction is 82 per cent; in a third 84 per cent; and in a fourth 67 per cent. I had the curiosity to see what

happens in the libraries of the United States; and there—supposing the system of cataloguing and enumeration to be the same—they are a trifle more serious in their taste than we are; where our average is about 70 per cent, at a place like Chicago it is only about 60 per cent. In Scotland, too, it ought to be said that they have a better average in respect to prose fiction. There is a larger demand for books called serious than in England. And I suspect, though I do not know, that one reason why there is in Scotland a greater demand for the more serious classes of literature than fiction, is that in the Scotch Universities there are what we have not in England—well-attended chairs of literature, systematically and methodically studied. Do not let it be supposed that I at all underrate the value of fiction. On the contrary, when a man has done a hard day's work, what can he do better than fall to and read the novels of Walter Scott, or the Brontës, or Mrs. Gaskell, or some of our living writers. I am rather a voracious reader of fiction myself. I do not, therefore, point to it as a reproach or as a source of discouragement, that fiction takes so large a place in the objects of literary interest. I only suggest that it is much too large, and we should be better pleased if it sank to about 40 per cent, and what is classified as general literature rose from 13 to 25 per cent.

There are other complaints of literature as an object of interest in this country. I was reading the other day an essay by the late head of my old college at Oxford, that very learned and remarkable man Mark Pattison, who was a booklover if ever

there was one. He complained that the bookseller's bill in the ordinary English middle class family is shamefully small. It appeared to him to be monstrous that a man who is earning £1000 a year should spend less than £1 a week on books—that is to say, less than a shilling in the pound per annum. I know that Chancellors of the Exchequer take from us 8d. or 6d. in the pound, and I am not sure that they always use it as wisely as if they left us to spend it on books. Still, a shilling in the pound to be spent on books by a clerk who earns a couple of hundred pounds a year, or by a workman who earns a quarter of that sum, is rather more, I think, than can be reasonably expected. A man does not really need to have a great many books. Pattison said that nobody who respected himself could have less than 1000 volumes. He pointed out that you can stack 1000 octavo volumes in a bookcase that shall be 13 feet by 10 feet, and 6 inches deep, and that everybody has that small amount of space at disposal. Still the point is not that men should have a great many books, but that they should have the right ones, and that they should use those that they have. We may all agree in lamenting that there are so many houses—even some of considerable social pretension—where you will not find a good atlas, a good dictionary, or a good cyclopædia of reference. What is still more lamentable, in a good many more houses where these books are, they are never referred to or opened. That is a very discreditable fact, because I defy anybody to take up a single copy of the *Times* newspaper and not

come upon something in it, upon which, if their interest in the affairs of the day were active, intelligent, and alert as it ought to be, they would consult an atlas, dictionary, or cyclopædia of reference.

No sensible person can suppose for a single moment that everybody is born with the ability for using books, for reading and studying literature. Certainly not everybody is born with the capacity of being a great scholar. All people are no more born great scholars like Gibbon and Bentley, than they are all born great musicians like Handel and Beethoven. What is much worse than that, many come into the world with the incapacity of reading, just as they come into it with the incapacity of distinguishing one tune from another. To them I have nothing to say. Even the morning paper is too much for them. They can only skim the surface even of that. I go further, and frankly admit that the habit and power of reading with reflection, comprehension, and memory all alert and awake, does not come at once to the natural man any more than many other sovereign virtues come to that interesting creature. What I do venture to press upon you is, that it requires no preterhuman force of will in any young man or woman—unless household circumstances are more than usually vexatious and unfavourable—to get at least half an hour out of a solid busy day for good and disinterested reading. Some will say that this is too much to expect, and the first persons to say it, I venture to predict, will be those who waste their time most. At any rate, if I cannot get half an hour, I will be content with a quarter. Now, in

half an hour I fancy you can read fifteen or twenty pages of Burke ; or you can read one of Wordsworth's masterpieces—say the lines on Tintern ; or say, one-third—if a scholar, in the original, and if not, in a translation—of a book of the Iliad or the Æneid. I do not think that I am filling the half-hour too full. But try for yourselves what you can read in half an hour. Then multiply the half-hour by 365, and consider what treasures you might have laid by at the end of the year ; and what happiness, fortitude, and wisdom they would have given you during all the days of your life.

I will not take up your time by explaining the various mechanical contrivances and aids to successful study. They are not to be despised by those who would extract the most from books. Many people think of knowledge as of money. They would like knowledge, but cannot face the perseverance and self-denial that go to the acquisition of it. The wise student will do most of his reading with a pen or a pencil in his hand. He will not shrink from the useful toil of making abstracts and summaries of what he is reading. Sir William Hamilton was a strong advocate for underscoring books of study. "Intelligent underlining," he said, "gave a kind of abstract of an important work, and by the use of different coloured inks to mark a difference of contents, and discriminate the doctrinal from the historical or illustrative elements of an argument or exposition, the abstract became an analysis very serviceable for ready reference." [1] This assumes, as Hamilton said,

[1] Veitch's *Life of Hamilton*, pp. 314, 392.

that the book to be operated on is your own, and perhaps is rather too elaborate a counsel of perfection for most of us. Again, some great men—Gibbon was one, and Daniel Webster was another, and the great Lord Strafford was a third—always before reading a book made a short, rough analysis of the questions which they expected to be answered in it, the additions to be made to their knowledge, and whither it would take them.

"After glancing my eye," says Gibbon, "over the design and order of a new book, I suspended the perusal until I had finished the task of self-examination; till I had revolved in a solitary walk all that I knew or believed or had thought on the subject of the whole work or of some particular chapter: I was then qualified to discern how much the author added to my original stock; and if I was sometimes satisfied by the agreement, I was sometimes armed by the opposition, of our ideas." [1]

I have sometimes tried that way of steadying and guiding attention; and I commend it to you. I need not tell you that you will find that most books worth reading once are worth reading twice, and—what is most important of all—the masterpieces of literature are worth reading a thousand times. It is a great mistake to think that because you have read a masterpiece once or twice, or ten times, therefore you have done with it. Because it is a masterpiece, you ought to live with it, and make it part of your daily life. Another practice is that of keeping a common-place book, and transcribing into it what is

[1] Dr. Smith's *Gibbon*, i. 64.

striking and interesting and suggestive. And if you keep it wisely, as Locke has taught us, you will put every entry under a head, division, or sub-division.[1] This is an excellent practice for concentrating your thought on the passage and making you alive to its real point and significance. Here, however, the high authority of Gibbon is against us. He refuses "strenuously to recommend." "The action of the pen," he says, "will doubtless imprint an idea on the mind as well as on the paper; but I much question whether the benefits of this laborious method are adequate to the waste of time; and I must agree with Dr. Johnson (*Idler*, No. 74) that 'what is twice read is commonly better remembered than what is transcribed.'"[2]

Various correspondents have asked me to say something about those lists of a hundred books that have been circulating through the world within the last few months. I have examined some of these lists with considerable care, and whatever else may be said of them—and I speak of them with deference and reserve, because men for whom one must have a great regard have compiled them—they do not seem to me to be calculated either to create or satisfy a wise taste for literature in any very worthy sense. To fill a man with a hundred parcels of heterogeneous

[1] "If I would put anything in my Common-place Book, I find out a head to which I may refer it. Each head ought to be some important and essential word to the matter in hand" (Locke's *Works*, iii. 308, ed. 1801). This is for indexing purposes, but it is worth while to go further and make a title for the passage extracted, indicating its pith and purport.

[2] Dr. Smith's *Gibbon*, i. 51.

scraps from the *Mahabharata*, and the *Sheking*, down to *Pickwick* and *White's Selborne*, may pass the time, but I cannot perceive how it would strengthen or instruct or delight. For instance, it is a mistake to think that every book that has a great name in the history of books or of thought is worth reading. Some of the most famous books are least worth reading. Their fame was due to their doing something that needed in their day to be done. The work done, the virtue of the book expires. Again, I agree with those who say that the steady working down one of these lists would end in the manufacture of that obnoxious product—the prig. A prig has been defined as an animal that is overfed for its size. I think that these bewildering miscellanies would lead to an immense quantity of that kind of overfeeding. The object of reading is not to dip into everything that even wise men have ever written. In the words of one of the most winning writers of English that ever existed—Cardinal Newman—the object of literature in education is to open the mind, to correct it, to refine it, to enable it to comprehend and digest its knowledge, to give it power over its own faculties, application, flexibility, method, critical exactness, sagacity, address, and expression. These are the objects of that intellectual perfection which a literary education is destined to give. I will not venture on a list of a hundred books, but will recommend you instead to one book well worthy of your attention. Those who are curious as to what they should read in the region of pure literature will do well to pursue Mr. Frederic

Harrison's admirable volume, called *The Choice of Books.* You will find there as much wise thought, eloquently and brilliantly put, as in any volume of its size and on its subject, whether it be in the list of a hundred or not.

Let me pass to another topic. We are often asked whether it is best to study subjects, or authors, or books. Well, I think that is like most of the stock questions with which the perverse ingenuity of mankind torments itself. There is no universal and exclusive answer. My own answer is a very plain one. It is sometimes best to study books, sometimes authors, and sometimes subjects; but at all times it is best to study authors, subjects, and books in connection with one another. Whether you make your first approach from interest in an author or in a book, the fruit will be only half gathered if you leave off without new ideas and clearer lights both on the man and the matter. One of the noblest masterpieces in the literature of civil and political wisdom is to be found in Burke's three performances on the American war—his speech on Taxation in 1774, on Conciliation in 1775, and his letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol in 1777. I can only repeat to you what I have been saying in print and out of it for a good many years, and what I believe more firmly as observation is enlarged by time and occasion, that these three pieces are the most perfect manual in all literature for the study of great affairs, whether for the purpose of knowledge or action. "They are an example," as I have said before now, "an example without fault of all the qualities which the

critic, whether a theorist or an actor, of great political situations should strive by night and by day to possess. If their subject were as remote as the quarrel between the Corinthians and Corcyra, or the war between Rome and the Allies, instead of a conflict to which the world owes the opportunity of one of the most important of political experiments, we should still have everything to learn from the author's treatment; the vigorous grasp of masses of compressed detail, the wide illumination from great principles of human experience, the strong and masculine feeling for the two great political ends of Justice and Freedom, the large and generous interpretation of expediency, the morality, the vision, the noble temper." No student worthy of the name will lay aside these pieces, so admirable in their literary expression, so important for history, so rich in the lessons of civil wisdom, until he has found out something from other sources as to the circumstances from which such writings arose, and as to the man whose resplendent genius inspired them. There are great personalities like Burke who march through history with voices like a clarion trumpet and something like the glitter of swords in their hands. They are as interesting as their work. Contact with them warms and kindles the mind. You will not be content, after reading one of these pieces, without knowing the character and personality of the man who conceived it, and until you have spent an hour or two—and an hour or two will go a long way with Burke still fresh in your mind—over other compositions in political literature,

over Bacon's civil pieces, or Machiavelli's *Prince*, and others in the same order of thought.

This points to the right answer to another question that is constantly asked. We are constantly asked whether desultory reading is among things lawful and permitted. May we browse at large in a library, as Johnson said, or is it forbidden to open a book without a definite aim and fixed expectations? I am for a compromise. If a man has once got his general point of view, if he has striven with success to place himself at the centre, what follows is of less consequence. If he has got in his head a good map of the country, he may ramble at large with impunity. If he has once well and truly laid the foundations of a methodical, systematic habit of mind, what he reads will find its way to its proper place. If his intellect is in good order, he will find in every quarter something to assimilate and something that will nourish.

Next I am going to deal with another question, with which perhaps I ought to have started. What is literature? It has often been defined. Emerson says it is a record of the best thoughts. "By literature," says another author, "we mean the written thoughts and feelings of intelligent men and women arranged in a way that shall give pleasure to the reader." A third account is that "the aim of a student of literature is to know the best that has been thought in the world." Definitions always appear to me in these things to be in the nature of vanity. I feel that the attempt to be compact in the definition of literature ends in something that

is rather meagre, partial, starved, and unsatisfactory. I turn to the answer given by a great French writer to a question not quite the same, viz. "What is a classic?" Literature consists of a whole body of classics in the true sense of the word, and a classic, as Saint-Beuve defines him, is an "author who has enriched the human mind, who has really added to its treasure, who has got it to take a step further; who has discovered some unequivocal moral truth, or penetrated to some eternal passion, in that heart of man where it seemed as though all were known and explored, who has produced his thought, or his observation, or his invention under some form, no matter what, so it be great, large, acute, and reasonable, sane and beautiful in itself; who has spoken to all in a style of his own, yet a style which finds itself the style of everybody,—in a style that is at once new and antique, and is the contemporary of all the ages." Another Frenchman, Doudan, who died in 1872, has an excellent passage on the same subject:—

"The man of letters properly so called is a rather singular being: he does not look at things exactly with his own eyes, he has not impressions of his own, we could not discover the imagination with which he started. 'Tis a tree on which have been grafted Homer, Virgil, Milton, Dante, Petrarch; hence have grown peculiar flowers which are not natural, and yet which are not artificial. Study has given to the man of letters something of the reverie of Réne; with Homer he has looked upon the plain of Troy, and there has remained in his brain some of the light of the Grecian sky; he has taken a little of the

pensive lustre of Virgil, as he wanders by his side on the slopes of the Aventine · he sees the world as Milton saw it, through the grey mists of England, as Dante saw it, through the clear and glowing light of Italy. Of all these colours he composes for himself a colour that is unique and his own ; from all these glasses by which his life passes on its journey to the real world, there is formed a special tint, and that is what makes the imagination of men of letters."

At a single hearing you may not take all that in ; but if you should have any opportunity of recurring to it, you will find this a satisfactory, full, and instructive account of what is a classic, and will find in it a full and satisfactory account of what those who have thought most on literature hope to get from it, and most would desire to confer upon others by it. Literature consists of all the books—and they are not so many—where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity, and attraction of form. My notion of the literary student is one who through books explores the strange voyages of man's moral reason, the impulses of the human heart, the chances and changes that have overtaken human ideals of virtue and happiness, of conduct and manners, and the shifting fortunes of great conceptions of truth and virtue. Poets, dramatists, humorists, satirists, masters of fiction, the great preachers, the character-writers, the maxim-writers, the great political orators—they are all literature in so far as they teach us to know man and to know human nature. This is what makes literature, rightly sifted and selected and rightly

studied, not the mere elegant trifling that it is so often and so erroneously supposed to be, but a proper instrument for a systematic training of the imagination and sympathies, and of a genial and varied moral sensibility.

From this point of view let me remind you that books are not the products of accident and caprice. As Goethe said, if you would understand an author, you must understand his age. The same thing is just as true of a book. If you would fully comprehend it, you must know the age. There is an order; there are causes and relations between great compositions and the societies in which they have emerged. Just as the naturalist strives to understand and to explain the distribution of plants and animals over the surface of the globe, to connect their presence or their absence with the great geological, climatic, and oceanic changes, so the student of literature, if he be wise, undertakes an ordered and connected survey of ideas, of tastes, of sentiments, of imagination, of humour, of invention, as they affect and as they are affected by the ever changing experiences of human nature, and the manifold variations that time and circumstances are incessantly working in human society.

Those who are possessed, and desire to see others possessed, by that conception of literary study must watch with the greatest sympathy and admiration the efforts of those who are striving so hard, and, I hope, so successfully, to bring the systematic and methodical study of our own literature, in connection with other literatures, among subjects for teaching

and examination in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. I regard these efforts with the liveliest interest and sympathy. Everybody agrees that an educated man ought to have a general notion of the course of the great outward events of European history. So, too, an educated man ought to have a general notion of the course of all those inward thoughts and moods which find their expression in literature. I think that in cultivating the study of literature, as I have perhaps too laboriously endeavoured to define it, you will be cultivating the most important side of history. Knowledge of it gives stability and substance to character. It furnishes a view of the ground we stand on. It builds up a solid backing of precedent and experience. It teaches us where we are. It protects us against imposture and surprise.

Before closing I should like to say one word upon the practice of composition. I have suffered, by the chance of life, many things from the practice of composition. It has been my lot, I suppose, to read more unpublished work than any one else in this room.

There is an idea, and, I venture to think, a very mistaken idea, that you cannot have a taste for literature unless you are yourself an author. I make bold entirely to demur to that proposition. It is practically most mischievous, and leads scores and even hundreds of people to waste their time in the most unprofitable manner that the wit of man can devise, on work in which they can no more achieve even the most moderate excellence than they can

compose a Ninth Symphony or paint a Transfiguration. It is a terrible error to suppose that because one is happily able to relish "Wordsworth's solemn-thoughted idyll, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie," therefore a solemn mission calls you to run off to write bad verse at the Lakes or the Isle of Wight. I beseech you not all to turn to authorship. I will even venture, with all respect to those who are teachers of literature, to doubt the excellence and utility of the practice of over-much essay-writing and composition. I have very little faith in rules of style, though I have an unbounded faith in the virtue of cultivating direct and precise expression. But you must carry on the operation inside the mind, and not merely by practising literary deportment on paper. It is not everybody who can command the mighty rhythm of the greatest masters of human speech. But every one can make reasonably sure that he knows what he means, and whether he has found the right word. These are internal operations, and are not forwarded by writing for writing's sake. Everybody must be urgent for attention to expression, if that attention be exercised in the right way. It has been said a million times that the foundation of right expression in speech or writing is sincerity. That is as true now as it has ever been. Right expression is a part of character. As somebody has said, by learning to speak with precision, you learn to think with correctness; and the way to firm and vigorous speech lies through the cultivation of high and noble sentiments. So far as my observation has gone, men will do better

if they seek precision by studying carefully and with an open mind and a vigilant eye the great models of writing, than by excessive practice of writing on their own account.

Much might here be said on what is one of the most important of all the sides of literary study. I mean its effect as helping to preserve the dignity and the purity of the English language. That noble instrument has never been exposed to such dangers as those which beset it to-day. Domestic slang, scientific slang, pseudoæsthetic affectations, hideous importations from American newspapers, all bear down with horrible force upon the glorious fabric which the genius of our race has reared. I will say nothing of my own on this pressing theme, but will read to you a passage of weight and authority from the greatest master of mighty and beautiful speech.

"Whoever in a state," said Milton, "knows how wisely to form the manners of men and to rule them at home and in war with excellent institutes, him in the first place, above others, I should esteem worthy of all honour. But next to him the man who strives to establish in maxims and rules the method and habit of speaking and writing received from a good age of the nation, and, as it were, to fortify the same round with a kind of wall, and daring to overleap which let a law only short of that of Romulus be used to prevent.... The one, as I believe, supplies noble courage and intrepid counsel against an enemy invading the territory. The other takes to himself the task of extirpating and defeating, by means of a learned detective police of ears, and a light band of good authors,

that barbarism which makes large inroads upon the minds of men, and is a destructive intestine enemy of genius. Nor is it to be considered of small consequence what language, pure or corrupt, a people has, or what is their customary degree of propriety in speaking it. . . . For, let the words of a country be in part unhandsome and offensive in themselves, in part debased by wear and wrongly uttered, and what do they declare, but, by no light indication, that the inhabitants of that country are an indolent, idly-yawning race, with minds already long prepared for any amount of servility? On the other hand, we have never heard that any empire, any state, did not at least flourish in a middling degree as long as its own liking and care for its language lasted." [1]

The probabilities are that we are now coming to an epoch of a quieter style. There have been in our generation three strong masters in the art of prose writing. There was, first of all, Carlyle, there was Macaulay, and there is Mr. Ruskin. These are all giants, and they have the rights of giants. But I do not believe that a greater misfortune can befall the students who attend classes here, than that they should strive to write like any one of these three illustrious men. I think it is the worst thing that can happen to them. They can never attain to the high mark which they have set before themselves. It is not everybody who can bend the bow of Ulysses, and most men only do themselves a mischief by trying to bend it. If we are now on our way to a quieter style, I am not sorry for it. Truth is quiet. Milton's phrase ever lingers in our minds

[1] Letter to Bonmattei, from Florence, 1638.

as one of imperishable beauty—where he regrets that he is drawn by I know not what, from beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies. Moderation and judgment are, for most purposes, more than the flash and the glitter even of the genius. I hope that your professors of rhetoric will teach you to cultivate that golden art—the steadfast use of a language in which truth can be told; a speech that is strong by natural force, and not merely effective by declamation; an utterance without trick, without affectation, without mannerisms, without any of that excessive ambition which overleaps itself as disastrously in prose writing as in so many other things.

I will detain you no longer. I hope that I have made it clear that we conceive the end of education on its literary side to be to make a man and not a cyclopædia, to make a citizen and not an album of elegant extracts. Literature does not end with knowledge of forms, with inventories of books and authors, with finding the key of rhythm, with the varying measure of the stanza, or the changes from the involved and sonorous periods of the seventeenth century down to the *staccato* of the nineteenth, or all the rest of the technicalities of scholarship. Do not think I contemn these. They are all good things to know, but they are not ends in themselves. The intelligent man, says Plato, will prize those studies which result in his soul getting soberness, righteousness, and wisdom, and he will less value the others. Literature is one of the instruments, and one of the most powerful instruments, for forming character,

for giving us men and women armed with reason, braced by knowledge, clothed with steadfastness and courage, and inspired by that public spirit and public virtue of which it has been well said that they are the brightest ornaments of the mind of man. Bacon is right, as he generally is, when he bids us read not to contradict and refute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and to consider. Yes, let us read to weigh and to consider. In the times before us that promise or threaten deep political, economical, and social controversy, what we need to do is to induce our people to weigh and consider. We want them to cultivate energy without impatience, activity without restlessness, inflexibility without ill-humour. I am not going to preach to you any artificial stoicism. I am not going to preach to you any indifference to money, or to the pleasures of social intercourse, or to the esteem and good-will of our neighbours, or to any other of the consolations and necessities of life. But, after all, the thing that matters most, both for happiness and for duty, is that we should strive habitually to live with wise thoughts and right feelings. Literature helps us more than other studies to this most blessed companionship of wise thoughts and right feelings, and so I have taken this opportunity of earnestly commending it to your interest and care.

APHORISMS[1]

SINCE I accepted the honour of the invitation to deliver the opening address of your course, I have found no small difficulty in settling down on an appropriate subject. I half wrote a discourse on modern democracy,—how the rule of numbers is to be reconciled with the rule of sage judgment, and the passion for liberty and equality is to be reconciled with sovereign regard for law, authority, and order; and how our hopes for the future are to be linked to wise reverence for tradition and the past. But your secretary had emphatically warned me off all politics, and I feared that however carefully I might be on my guard against every reference to the burning questions of the hour, yet the clever eyes of political charity would be sure to spy out party innuendoes in the most innocent deliverances of purely abstract philosophy. Then for a day or two I lingered over a subject in a little personal incident. One Saturday night last summer I found myself dining with an illustrious statesman on the Welsh border, and on the Monday following I was seated under the acacias by the shore of the Lake of

[1] An Address delivered before the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, *November* 11, 1887.

Geneva, where Gibbon, a hundred years ago almost to the day, had, according to his own famous words, laid down his pen after writing the last lines of his last page, and there under a serene sky, with the silver orb of the moon reflected from the waters, and amid the silence of nature, felt his joy at the completion of an immortal task, dashed by melancholy that he had taken everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion. It was natural that I should meditate on the contrast that might be drawn between great literary performance and great political performance, between the making of history and the writing of it,—a contrast containing matter enough not only for one, but for a whole series of edifying and instructive discourses. But there were difficulties here too, and the edifying discourse remains, like many another, incomplete.

So I am going to ask you after all to pass a tranquil hour with me in pondering a quiet chapter in the history of books. There is a loud cry in these days for clues that shall guide the plain man through the vast bewildering labyrinth of printed volumes. Everybody calls for hints what to read, and what to look out for in reading. Like all the rest of us, I have often been asked for a list of the hundred best books, and the other day a gentleman wrote to me to give him by return of post that far more difficult thing—a list of the three best books in the world. Both the hundred and the three are a task far too high for me; but perhaps you will let me try to indicate what, among so much else, is one of the things best worth hunting for in books, and

one of the quarters of the library where you may get on the scent. Though tranquil, it will be my fault if you find the hour dull, for this particular literary chapter concerns life, manners, society, conduct, human nature, our aims, our ideals, and all besides that is most animated and most interesting in man's busy chase after happiness and wisdom.

What is wisdom? That sovereign word, as has often been pointed out, is used for two different things. It may stand for knowledge, learning, science, systematic reasoning; or it may mean, as Coleridge has defined it, common sense in an uncommon degree; that is to say, the unsystematic truths that come to shrewd, penetrating, and observant minds, from their own experience of life and their daily commerce with the world, and that is called the wisdom of life, or the wisdom of the world, or the wisdom of time and the ages. The Greeks had two words for these two kinds of wisdom: one for the wise who scaled the heights of thought and knowledge; another for those who, without logical method, technical phraseology, or any of the parade of the schools, whether "Academics old and new, Cynic, Peripatetic, the sect Epicurean, or Stoic severe," held up the mirror to human nature, and took good counsel as to the ordering of character and of life.

Mill, in his little fragment on Aphorisms, has said that in the first kind of wisdom every age in which science flourishes ought to surpass the ages that have gone before. In knowledge and methods

of science each generation starts from the point at which its predecessor left off; but in the wisdom of life, in the maxims of good sense applied to public and to private conduct, there is, said Mill, a pretty nearly equal amount in all ages.

If this seem doubtful to any one, let him think how many of the shrewdest moralities of human nature are to be found in writings as ancient as the apocryphal Book of the Wisdom of Solomon and of Jesus the Son of Sirach; as *Æsop's Fables*; as the oracular sentences that are to be found in Homer and the Greek dramatists and orators; as all that immense host of wise and pithy saws which, to the number of between four and five thousand, were collected from all ancient literature by the industry of Erasmus in his great folio of Adages. As we turn over these pages of old time, we almost feel that those are right who tell us that everything has been said, that the thing that has been is the thing that shall be, and there is no new thing under the sun. Even so, we are happily not bound to Schopenhauer's gloomy conclusion (*Werke*, v. 332), that "The wise men of all times have always said the same, and the fools, that is the immense majority, of all times, have always done the same, that is to say, the opposite of what the wise have said; and that is why Voltaire tells us that we shall leave this world just as stupid and as bad as we found it when we came here."

It is natural that this second kind of wisdom, being detached and unsystematic, should embody itself in the short and pregnant form of proverb,

sentence, maxim, and aphorism. The essence of aphorism is the compression of a mass of thought and observation into a single saying. It is the very opposite of dissertation and declamation; its distinction is not so much ingenuity, as good sense brought to a point; it ought to be neither enigmatical nor flat, neither a truism on the one hand, nor a riddle on the other. These wise sayings, said Bacon, the author of some of the wisest of them, are not only for ornament, but for action and business, having a point or edge, whereby knots in business are pierced and discovered. And he applauds Cicero's description of such sayings as saltpits,—that you may extract salt out of them, and sprinkle it where you will. They are the guiding oracles which man has found out for himself in that great business of ours, of learning how to be, to do, to do without, and to depart. Their range extends from prudential kitchen maxims, such as Franklin set forth in the sayings of Poor Richard about thrift in time and money, up to such great and high moralities of life as are the prose maxims of Goethe,—just as Bacon's Essays extend from precepts as to building and planting, up to solemn reflections on truth, death, and the vicissitudes of things. They cover the whole field of man as he is, and life as it is, not of either as they ought to be; friendship, ambition, money, studies, business, public duty, in all their actual laws and conditions as they are, and not as the ideal moralist may wish that they were.

The substance of the wisdom of life must be

commonplace, for the best of it is the result of the common experience of the world. Its most universal and important propositions must in a certain sense be truisms. The road has been so broadly trodden by the hosts who have travelled along it, that the main rules of the journey are clear enough, and we all know that the secret of breakdown and wreck is seldom so much an insufficient knowledge of the route, as imperfect discipline of the will. The truism, however, and the commonplace may be stated in a form so fresh, pungent, and free from triviality, as to have all the force of new discovery. Hence the need for a caution, that few maxims are to be taken without qualification. They seek sharpness of impression by excluding one side of the matter and exaggerating another, and most aphorisms are to be read as subject to all sorts of limits, conditions, and corrections.

It has been said that the order of our knowledge is this: that we know best, first, what we have divined by native instinct; second, what we have learned by experience of men and things; third, what we have learned not in books, but by books—that is, by the reflections that they suggest; fourth, last and lowest, what we have learned in books or with masters. The virtue of an aphorism comes under the third of these heads: it conveys a portion of a truth with such point as to set us thinking on what remains. Montaigne, who delighted in Plutarch, and kept him ever on his table, praises him in that besides his long discourses, "there are a thousand others, which he has only touched and

glanced upon, where he only points with his finger to direct us which way we may go if we will, and contents himself sometimes with only giving one brisk hit in the nicest article of the question, from whence we are to grope out the rest." And this is what Plutarch himself is driving at, when he warns young men that it is well to go for a light to another man's fire, but by no means to tarry by it, instead of kindling a torch of their own.

Grammarians draw a distinction between a maxim and an aphorism, and tell us that while an aphorism only states some broad truth of general bearing, a maxim, besides stating the truth, enjoins a rule of conduct as its consequence. For instance, to say that "There are some men with just imagination enough to spoil their judgment" is an aphorism. But there is action as well as thought in such sayings as this: "'Tis a great sign of mediocrity to be always reserved in praise"; or in this of M. Aurelius, "When thou wishest to give thyself delight, think of the excellences of those who live with thee; for instance, of the energy of one, the modesty of another, the liberal kindness of a third." Again, according to this distinction of the word, we are to give the name of aphorism to Pascal's saying that "Most of the mischief in the world would never happen, if men would only be content to sit still in their parlours." [1] But we should give the name of maxim

[1] La Bruyère also says:—"All mischief comes from our not being able to be alone; hence play, luxury, dissipation, wine, ignorance, calumny, envy, forgetfulness of one's self and of God."

to the profound and admirably humane counsel of a philosopher of a very different school, that "If you would love mankind, you should not expect too much from them."

But the distinction is one without much difference; we need not labour it nor pay it further attention. Aphorism or maxim, let us remember that this wisdom of life is the true salt of literature; that those books, at least in prose, are most nourishing which are most richly stored with it; and that it is one of the main objects, apart from the mere acquisition of knowledge, which men ought to seek in the reading of books.

A living painter has said, that the longer he works, the more does he realise how very little anybody except the trained artist actually perceives in the natural objects constantly before him; how blind men are to impressions of colour and light and form, which would be full of interest and delight, if people only knew how to see them. Are not most of us just as blind to the thousand lights and shades in the men and women around us? We live in the world as we live among fellow-inmates in a hotel, or fellow-revellers at a masquerade. Yet this, to bring knowledge of ourselves and others "home to our businesses and our bosoms," is one of the most important parts of culture.

Some prejudice is attached in generous minds to this wisdom of the world as being egotistical, poor, unimaginative, of the earth earthy. Since the great literary reaction at the end of the last century, men have been apt to pitch criticism of

life in the high poetic key. They have felt with Wordsworth :—

" The human nature unto which I felt
That I belonged, and reverenced with love,
Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit
Diffused through time and space, with aid derived
Of evidence from monuments, erect,
Prostrate, or leaning towards their common rest
In earth, the widely-scattered wreck sublime
Of vanished nations."

Then again, there is another cause for the passing eclipse of interest in wisdom of the world. Extraordinary advances have been made in ordered knowledge of the various stages of the long prehistoric dawn of human civilisation. The man of the flint implement and the fire-drill, who could only count up to five, and who was content to live in a hut like a bechive, has drawn interest away from the man of the market and the parlour. The literary passion for primitive times and the raw material of man has thrust polished man, the manufactured article, into a secondary place. All this is in the order of things. It is fitting enough that we should pierce into the origins of human nature. It is right, too, that the poets, the ideal interpreters of life, should be dearer to us than those who stop short with mere deciphering of what is real and actual. The poet has his own sphere of the beautiful and the sublime. But it is no less true that the enduring weight of historian, moralist, political orator, or preacher depends on the amount of the wisdom of life that is hived in his pages. They may be ad-

mirable by virtue of other qualities, by learning, by grasp, by majesty of flight; but it is his moral sentences on mankind or the State that rank the prose writer among the sages. These show that he has an eye for the large truths of action, for the permanent bearings of conduct, and for things that are for the guidance of all generations. What is it that makes Plutarch's Lives "the pasture of great souls," as they were called by one who was herself a great soul? Because his aim was much less to tell a story than, as he says, "to decipher the man and his nature"; and in deciphering the man, to strike out pregnant and fruitful thoughts on all men. Why was it worth while for Mr. Jowett, the other day, to give us a new translation of Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War? And why is it worth your while, at least to dip in a serious spirit into its pages? Partly, because the gravity and concision of Thucydides are of specially wholesome example in these days of over-coloured and over-voluminous narrative; partly, because he knows how to invest the wreck and overthrow of those small states with the pathos and dignity of mighty imperial fall; but most of all, for the sake of the wise sentences that are sown with apt but not unsparing hand through the progress of the story. Well might Gray ask his friend whether Thucydides' description of the final destruction of the Athenian host at Syracuse was not the finest thing he ever read in his life; and assuredly the man who can read that stern tale without admiration, pity, and awe may be certain that he has no taste for noble

composition, and no feeling for the deepest tragedy of mortal things. But it is the sagacious sentences in the speeches of Athenians, Corinthians, Lacedæmonians, that do most of all to give to the historian his perpetuity of interest to every reader with the rudiments of a political instinct, and make Thucydides as modern as if he had written yesterday.

Tacitus belongs to a different class among the great writers of the world. He had, beyond almost any author of the front rank that has ever lived, the art of condensing his thought and driving it home to the mind of the reader with a flash. Beyond almost anybody, he suffered from what a famous writer of aphorisms in our time has described as "the cursed ambition to put a whole book into a page, a whole page into a phrase, and the phrase into a word." But the moral thought itself in Tacitus mostly belongs less to the practical wisdom of life, than to sombre poetic indignation, like that of Dante, against the perversities of men and the blindness of fortune. Horace's Epistles are a mine of genial, friendly, humane observation. Then there is none of the ancient moralists to whom the modern, from Montaigne, Charron, Ralegh, Bacon, downwards, owe more than to Seneca. Seneca has no spark of the kindly warmth of Horace; he has not the animation of Plutarch; he abounds too much in the artificial and extravagant paradoxes of the Stoics. But, for all that, he touches the great and eternal commonplaces of human occasion—friendship, health, bereavement, riches, poverty, death—with a hand that places him high among the wise masters of life.

All through the ages men tossed in the beating waves of circumstance have found more abundantly in the essays and letters of Seneca than in any other secular writer words of good counsel and comfort. And let this fact not pass, without notice of the light that it sheds on the fact of the unity of literature, and of the absurdity of setting a wide gulf between ancient or classical literature and modern, as if under all dialects the partakers in Græco-Roman civilisation, whether in Athens, Rome, Paris, Weimar, Edinburgh, London, Dublin, were not the heirs of a great common stock of thought as well as of speech.

I certainly do not mean anything so absurd as that the moralities, whether major or minor, whether affecting the foundation of conduct or the surface of manners, remain fixed. On the contrary, one of the most interesting things in literature is to mark the shifts and changes in men's standards. For instance, Boswell tells a curious story of the first occasion on which Johnson met Sir Joshua Reynolds. Two ladies of the company were regretting the death of a friend to whom they owed great obligations. Reynolds observed that they had at any rate the comfort of being relieved from a debt of gratitude. The ladies were naturally shocked at this singular alleviation of their grief, but Johnson defended it in his clear and forcible manner, and, says Boswell, "was much pleased with the mind, the fair view of human nature, that it exhibited, like some of the reflections of Rochefoucauld." On the strength of it he went home with Reynolds, supped with him, and was his friend for life. No moralist with a

reputation to lose would like to back Reynolds's remark in the nineteenth century.

Our own generation in Great Britain has been singularly unfortunate in the literature of aphorism. One too famous volume of proverbial philosophy had immense vogue, but it is so vapid, so wordy, so futile, as to have a place among the books that dispense with parody. Then, rather earlier in the century, a clergyman, who ruined himself by gambling, ran away from his debts to America, and at last blew his brains out, felt peculiarly qualified to lecture mankind on moral prudence. He wrote a little book in 1820, called *Lacon; or Many Things in Few Words, addressed to those who think.* It is an awful example to anybody who is tempted to try his hand at an aphorism. Thus, "Marriage is a feast where the grace is sometimes better than the dinner." I had made some other extracts from this unhappy sage, but you will thank me for having thrown them into the fire. Finally, a great authoress of our time was urged by a friend to fill up a gap in our literature by composing a volume of Thoughts: the result was that least felicitous of performances, *Theophrastus Such.* One living writer of genius has given us a little sheaf of subtly-pointed maxims in the *Ordeal of Richard Feverel,* and perhaps he will one day divulge to the world the whole contents of Sir Austin Feverel's unpublished volume, *The Pilgrim's Scrip.*

Yet the wisdom of life has its full part in our literature. Keen insight into peculiarities of individual motive, and concentrated interest in the play

of character, shine not merely in Shakespeare, whose mighty soul, as Hallam says, was saturated with moral observation, nor in the brilliant verse of Pope. For those who love meditative reading on the ways and destinies of men, we have Burton and Fuller and Sir Thomas Browne in one age, and Addison, Johnson, and the rest of the Essayists, in another. Sir Thomas Overbury's *Characters*, written in the Baconian age, are found delightful by some; but for my own part, though I have striven to follow the critic's golden rule, to have preferences but no exclusions, Overbury has for me no savour. In the great art of painting moral portraits, or character-writing, the characters in Clarendon, or in Burnet's *History of His Own Time*, are full of life, vigour, and coherency, and are intensely attractive to read. I cannot agree with those who put either Clarendon or Burnet on a level with the characters in St. Simon or the Cardinal de Retz: there is a subtlety of analysis, a searching penetration, a breadth of moral comprehension, in the Frenchmen, which I do not find, nor, in truth, much desire to find, in our countrymen. A homelier hand does well enough for homelier men. Nevertheless, such characters as those of Falkland, or Chillingworth, by Clarendon, or Burnet's very different Lauderdale, are worth a thousand battle-pieces, cabinet plots, or parliamentary combinations, of which we never can be sure that the narrator either knew or has told the whole story. It is true that these characters have not the strange quality which some one imputed to the writing of Tacitus, that it seems to put the reader himself and the

secrets of his own heart into the confessional. It is in the novel that, in this country, the faculty of observing social man and his peculiarities has found its most popular instrument. The great novel, not of romance or adventure, but of character and manners, from the mighty Fielding, down, at a long interval, to Thackeray, covers the field that in France is held, and successfully held, against all comers, by her maxim-writers, like La Rochefoucauld, and her character-writers, like La Bruyère. But the literature of aphorism contains one English name of magnificent and immortal lustre—the name of Francis Bacon. Bacon's essays are the unique masterpiece in our literature of this oracular wisdom of life, applied to the scattered occasions of men's existence. The Essays are known to all the world; but there is another and perhaps a weightier performance of Bacon's which is less known, or not known at all, except to students here and there. I mean the second chapter of the eighth book of his famous treatise, *De Augmentis*. It has been translated into pithy English, and is to be found in the fifth volume of the great edition of Bacon, by Spedding and Ellis.

In this chapter, among other things, he composes comments on between thirty and forty of what he calls the Aphorisms or Proverbs of Solomon, which he truly describes as containing, besides those of a theological character, 'not a few excellent civil precepts and cautions, springing from the inmost recesses of wisdom, and extending to much variety of occasions." I know not where else to

find more of the salt of common sense in an uncommon degree than in Bacon's terse comments on the wise King's terse sentences, and in the keen, sagacious, shrewd wisdom of the world, lighted up by such brilliance of wit and affluence of illustration, in the pages that come after them.

This sort of wisdom was in the taste of the time; witness Ralegh's *Instructions to his Son*, and that curious collection "of political and polemical aphorisms grounded on authority and experience," which he called by the name of the *Cabinet Council*. Harrington's *Political Aphorisms*, which came a generation later, are not moral sentences; they are a string of propositions in political theory, breathing a noble spirit of liberty, though too abstract for practical guidance through the troubles of the day. But Bacon's admonitions have a depth and copiousness that are all his own. He says that the knowledge of advancement in life, though abundantly practised, had not been sufficiently handled in books, and so he here lays down the precepts for what he calls the *Architecture of Fortune*. They constitute the description of a man who is politic for his own fortune, and show how he may best shape a character that will attain the ends of fortune.

First, A man should accustom his mind to judge of the proportion and value of all things as they conduce to his fortune and ends.

Second, Not to undertake things beyond his strength, nor to row against the stream.

Third, Not to wait for occasions always, but sometimes to challenge and induce them, according

to that saying of Demosthenes: "In the same manner as it is a received principle that the general should lead the army, so should wise men lead affairs," causing things to be done which they think good, and not themselves waiting upon events.

Fourth, Not to take up anything which of necessity forestalls a great quantity of time, but to have this sound ever ringing in our ears: "Time is flying—time that can never be retrieved."

Fifth, Not to engage one's-self too peremptorily in anything, but ever to have either a window open to fly out at, or a secret way to retire by.

Sixth, To follow that ancient precept, not construed to any point of perfidiousness, but only to caution and moderation, that we are to treat our friend as if he might one day be a foe, and our foe as if he should one day be friend.

All these Bacon called the good arts, as distinguished from the evil arts that had been described years before by Machiavelli in his famous book *The Prince*, and also in his *Discourses*. Bacon called Machiavelli's sayings depraved and pernicious, and a corrupt wisdom, as indeed they are. He was conscious that his own maxims, too, stood in some need of elevation and of correction, for he winds up with wise warnings against being carried away by a whirlwind or tempest of ambition; by the general reminder that all things are vanity and vexation of spirit, and the particular reminder that, "Being without well-being is a curse, and the greater being, the greater curse," and that "all virtue is most rewarded, and all wickedness most punished in

itself"; by the question whether this incessant, restless, and, as it were, Sabbathless pursuit of fortune, leaves time for holier duties, and what advantage it is to have a face erected towards heaven, with a spirit perpetually grovelling upon earth, eating dust like a serpent; and finally, he says that it will not be amiss for men, in this eager and excited chase of fortune, to cool themselves a little with that conceit of Charles V. in his instructions to his son, that "Fortune hath somewhat of the nature of a woman, who, if she be too closely wooed, is commonly the further off."

There is Baconian humour as well as a curious shrewdness in such an admonition as that which I will here transcribe, and there are many like it:—

"It is therefore no unimportant attribute of prudence in a man to be able to set forth to advantage before others, with grace and skill, his virtues, fortunes, and merits (which may be done without arrogance or breeding disgust); and again, to cover artificially his weaknesses, defects, misfortunes, and disgraces; dwelling upon the former and turning them to the light, sliding from the latter or explaining them away by apt interpretations and the like. Tacitus says of Mucianus, the wisest and most active politician of his time, 'That he had a certain art of setting forth to advantage everything he said or did.' And it requires indeed some art, lest it become wearisome and contemptible; but yet it is true that ostentation though carried to the first degree of vanity, is rather a vice in morals than in policy. For as it is said of calumny, 'Calumniate boldly, for some of it will stick,' so it may be said of ostentation (except it be in a ridiculous degree of deformity), 'Boldly sound your own praises, and some

of them will stick.' It will stick with the more ignorant and the populace, though men of wisdom may smile at it; and the reputation won with many will amply countervail the disdain of a few. . . . And surely no small number of those who are of a solid nature, and who, from the want of this ventosity, cannot spread all sail in pursuit of their own honour, suffer some prejudice and lose dignity by their moderation."

Nobody need go to such writings as these for moral dignity or moral energy. They have no place in that nobler literature, from Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius downwards, which lights up the young soul with generous aims, and fires it with the love of all excellence. Yet the most heroic cannot do without a dose of circumspection. The counsels of old Polonius to Laertes are less sublime than Hamlet's soliloquy, but they have their place. Bacon's chapters are a manual of circumspection, whether we choose to give to circumspection a high or a low rank in the list of virtues. Bacon knew of the famous city which had three gates, and on the first the horsemen read inscribed, "Be bold"; and on the second gate yet again, "Be bold, and evermore be bold"; and on the third it was written, "Be not too bold."

This cautious tone had been brought about by the circumstances of the time. Government was strict; dissent from current opinions was dangerous; there was no indifference and hardly any tolerance; authority was suspicious and it was vindictive. When the splendid genius of Burke rose like a new sun into the sky, the times were happier, and nowhere in

our literature does a noble prudence wear statelier robes than in the majestic compositions of Burke.

Those who are curious to follow the literature of aphorism into Germany, will, with the mighty exceptions of Goethe and Schiller, find but a parched and scanty harvest. The Germans too often justify the unfriendly definition of an aphorism as a form of speech that wraps up something quite plain in words that turn it into something very obscure. As old Fuller says, the writers have a hair hanging to the nib of their pen. Their shortness does not prevent them from being tiresome. They recall the French wit to whom a friend showed a distich: "Excellent," he said; "but isn't it rather spun out?"

Lichtenberg, a professor of physics, who was also a considerable hand at satire a hundred years ago, composed a collection of sayings, not without some wheat amid much chaff. A later German writer, of whom I will speak in a moment or two, Schopenhauer, has some excellent remarks on Self-reflection, and on the difference between those who think for themselves and those who think for other people; between genuine Philosophers, who look at things first hand for their own sake, and Sophists, who look at words and books for the sake of making an appearance before the world, and seek their happiness in what they hope to get from others: he takes Herder for an example of the Sophist, and Lichtenberg for the true Philosopher. It is true that we hear the voice of the Self-thinker, and not the mere Book-philosopher, if we may use for

once those uncouth compounds, in such sayings as these :—

" People who never have any time are the people who do least."

" The utmost that a weak head can get out of experience is an extra readiness to find out the weaknesses of other people."

" Over-anxiously to feel and think what one could have done, is the very worst thing one can do."

" He who has less than he desires, should know that he has more than he deserves."

" Enthusiasts without capacity are the really dangerous people."

This last, by the way, recalls a saying of the great French reactionary, De Bonald, which is never quite out of date : " Follies committed by the sensible, extravagances uttered by the clever, crimes perpetrated by the good,—there is what makes revolutions."

Radowitz was a Prussian soldier and statesman, who died in 1853, after doing enough to convince men since that the revolution of 1848 produced no finer mind. He left among other things two or three volumes of short fragmentary pieces on politics, religion, literature, and art. They are intelligent and elevated, but contain hardly anything to our point to-night, unless it be this,—that what is called Stupidity springs not at all from mere want of understanding, but from the fact that the free use of a man's understanding is hindered by some definite vice : Frivolity, Envy, Dissipation, Covetousness, all these darling vices of fallen man,—these are at

the bottom of what we name Stupidity. This is true enough, but it is not so much to the point as the saying of a highly judicious aphorist of my own acquaintance, that "Excessive anger against human stupidity is itself one of the most provoking of all forms of stupidity."

Another author of aphorisms of the Goethe period was Klinger, a playwriter, who led a curious and varied life in camps and cities, who began with a vehement enthusiasm for the sentimentalism of Rousseau, and ended, as such men often end, with a hard and stubborn cynicism. He wrote *Thoughts on different Subjects of the World and Literature*, which are intelligent and masculine, if they are not particularly pungent in expression. One of them runs—"He who will write interestingly must be able to keep heart and reason in close and friendliest connection. The heart must warm the reason, and reason must in turn blow on the embers if they are to burst into flame." This illustrates what an aphorism should not be. Contrast its clumsiness with the brevity of the famous and admirable saying of Vauvenargues, that "great thoughts come from the heart."

Schopenhauer gave to one of his minor works the name of *Aphorismen zu Lebens-Weisheit*, "Aphorisms for the Wisdom of Life," and he put to it, by way of motto, Chamfort's saying, "Happiness is no easy matter; 'tis very hard to find it within ourselves, and impossible to find it anywhere else." Schopenhauer was so well read in European literature, he had such natural alertness of mind, and his style

is so pointed, direct, and wide-awake, that these detached discussions are interesting and most readable; but for the mos' part discussions they are, and not aphorisms. Thus, in the saying that "The perfect man of the world should be he who never sticks fast in indecision, nor ever falls into overhaste," the force of it lies in what goes before and what follows after. The whole collection, winding up with the chapter of Counsels and Maxims, is in the main an unsystematic enforcement of those peculiar views of human happiness and its narrow limits which proved to be the most important part of Schopenhauer's system. "The sovereign rule in the wisdom of life," he said, "I see in Aristotle's proposition (*Eth. Nic.* vii. 12), *ὁ φρόνιμος τό ἄλυπον διώκει οὐ τὸ ἥδυ*: Not pleasure but freedom from pain is what the sensible man goes after." The second volume, of Detached though systematically Ordered Thoughts on Various Circumstances, is miscellaneous in its range of topics, and is full of suggestion; but the thoughts are mainly philosophical and literary, and do not come very close to practical wisdom. In truth, so negative a view of happiness, such pale hopes and middling expectations, could not guide a man far on the path of active prudence, where we naturally take for granted that the goal is really something substantial, serious, solid, and positive.[1]

[1] Burke says on the point raised above: "I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. Without all doubt, the torments which we may be made to suffer are much greater in their effect

Nobody cared less than Schopenhauer for the wisdom that is drawn from books, or has said such hard things of mere reading. In the short piece to which I have already referred (p. 83), he works out the difference between the Scholar who has read in books, and the Thinkers, the Geniuses, the Lights of the World, and Furtherers of the human race, who have read directly from the world's own pages. Reading, he says, is only a *succedaneum* for one's own thinking. Reading is thinking with a strange head instead of one's own. People who get their wisdom out of books are like those who have got their knowledge of a country from the descriptions of travellers. Truth that has been picked up from books only sticks to us like an artificial limb, or a false tooth, or a rhinoplastic nose; the truth we have acquired by our own thinking is like the natural member. At least, as Goethe puts it in his verse,

> Was du ererbt von deinen Vätern hast,
> Erwirb es, um es zu besitzen.

What from thy fathers thou dost inherit, be sure thou earn it, that so it may become thine own.

It is only Goethe and Schiller, and especially Goethe, "the strong, much-toiling sage, with spirit free from

on the body and mind, than any pleasures which the most learned voluptuary could suggest." Nay, I am in great doubt whether any man could be found, who would earn a life of the most perfect satisfaction at the price of ending it in the torments which justice inflicted in a few hours on the late unfortunate regicide in France" (*Sublime and Beautiful*, pt. 1. sec. vii.). The reference is, of course, to Damien.

mists, and sane and clear," who combine the higher and the lower wisdom, and have skill to put moral truths into forms of words that fix themselves with stings in the reader's mind. All Goethe's work, whether poetry or prose, his plays, his novels, his letters, his conversations, are richly bestrewn with the luminous sentences of a keen-eyed, steadfast, patient, indefatigable watcher of human life. He deals gravely and sincerely with men. He has none of that shallow irony by which small men who have got wrong with the world seek a shabby revenge. He tells us the whole truth. He is not of those second-rate sages who keep their own secrets, externally complying with all the conventions of speech and demeanour, while privately nourishing unbridled freedom of opinion in the inner sanctuary of the mind. He handles soberly, faithfully, laboriously, cheerfully, every motive and all conduct. He marks himself the friend, the well-wisher, and the helper. I will not begin to quote from Goethe, for I should never end. The volume of *Sprüche*, or aphorisms in rhyme and prose in his collected works, is accessible to everybody, but some of his wisest and finest are to be found in the plays, like the well-known one in his *Tasso*, "In stillness Talent forms itself, but Character in the great current of the world."

But here is a concentrated admonition from the volume that I have named, that will do as well as any other for an example of his temper—

"Wouldst fashion for thyself a seemly life?—
Then fret not over what is past and gone;

And spite of all thou mayst have lost behind,
Yet act as if thy life were just begun.
What each day wills, enough for thee to know;
What each day wills, the day itself will tell.
Do thine own task, and be therewith content;
What others do, thou shalt that fairly judge;
Be sure that thou no brother-mortal hate,
Then all besides leave to the Master Power."

If any of you should be bitten with an unhappy passion for the composition of aphorisms, let me warn such an one that the power of observing life is rare, the power of drawing new lessons from it is rarer still, and the power of condensing the lesson in a pointed sentence is rarest of all. Beware of cultivating this delicate art. The effort is only too likely to add one more to that perverse class described by Gibbon, who strangle a thought in the hope of strengthening it, and applaud their own skill when they have shown in a few absurd words the fourth part of an idea. Let me warmly urge anybody with so mistaken an ambition, instead of painfully distilling poor platitudes of his own, to translate the shrewd saws of the wise browed Goethe.

Some have found light in the sayings of Balthasar Gracian, a Spaniard, who flourished at the end of the seventeenth century, whose maxims were translated into English at the very beginning of the eighteenth, and who was introduced to the modern public in an excellent article by Sir M. E. Grant Duff a few years ago. The English title is attractive,—*The Art of Prudence, or a Companion for a Man of Sense.* I do not myself find Gracian much of a

companion, though some of his aphorisms give a neat turn to a commonplace. Thus :—

"The pillow is a dumb Sibyl. To sleep upon a thing that is to be done, is better than to be wakened up by one already done."

"To equal a predecessor one must have twice his worth."

"What is easy ought to be entered upon as though it were difficult, and what is difficult as though it were easy."

"Those things are generally best remembered which ought most to be forgot. Not seldom the surest remedy of the evil consists in forgetting it."

It is France that excels in the form no less than in the matter of aphorism, and for the good reason that in France the arts of polished society were relatively at an early date the objects of a serious and deliberate cultivation, such as was and perhaps remains unknown in the rest of Europe. Conversation became a fine art. "I hate war," said one; "it spoils conversation." The leisured classes found their keenest relish in delicate irony, in piquancy, in contained vivacity, in the study of niceties of observation and finish of phrase. You have a picture of it in such a play as Molière's *Misanthropist*, where we see a section of the polished life of the time—men and women making and receiving compliments, discoursing on affairs with easy lightness, flitting backwards and forwards with a thousand petty hurries, and among them one singular figure, hoarse, rough, sombre, moving with a chilling reality in the midst of frolicking shadows. But the shadows

were all in all to one another. Not a point of conduct, not a subtlety of social motive, escaped detection and remark.

Dugald Stewart has pointed to the richness of the French tongue in appropriate and discriminating expressions for varieties of intellectual turn and shade. How many of us, who claim to a reasonable knowledge of French, will undertake easily to find English equivalents for such distinctions as are expressed in the following phrases—Esprit juste, esprit étendu, esprit fin, esprit délié, esprit de lumière. These numerous distinctions are the evidence, as Stewart says, of the attention paid by the cultivated classes to delicate shades of mind and feeling. Compare with them the colloquial use of our terribly overworked word "clever." Society and conversation have never been among us the school of reflection, the spring of literary inspiration, that they have been in France. The English rule has rather been like that of the ancient Persians, that the great thing is to learn to ride, to shoot with the bow, and to speak the truth. There is much in it. But it has been more favourable to strength than to either subtlety or finish.

One of the most commonly known of all books of maxims, after the Proverbs of Solomon, are the Moral Reflections of La Rochefoucauld. The author lived at court, himself practised all the virtues which he seemed to disparage, and took so much trouble to make sure of the right expression that many of these short sentences were more than thirty times revised. They were given to the world in the last

half of the seventeenth century in a little volume which Frenchmen used to know by heart, which gave a new turn to the literary taste of the nation, and which has been translated into every civilised tongue. It paints men as they would be if self-love were the one great mainspring of human action, and it makes magnanimity itself no better than self-interest in disguise.

"Interest," he says, "speaks all sorts of tongues and plays all sorts of parts, even the part of the disinterested."

"Gratitude is with most people only a strong desire for greater benefits to come."

"Love of justice is with most of us nothing but the fear of suffering injustice."

"Friendship is only a reciprocal conciliation of interests, a mutual exchange of good offices; it is a species of commerce out of which self-love always intends to make something."

"We have all strength enough to endure the troubles of other people."

"Our repentance is not so much regret for the ill we have done, as fear of the ill that may come to us in consequence."

And everybody here knows the saying that "In the adversity of our best friends we often find something that is not exactly displeasing."

We cannot wonder that in spite of their piquancy of form, such sentences as these have aroused in many minds an invincible repugnance for what would be so tremendous a calumny on human nature, if the book were meant to be a picture of human nature as a whole. "I count Rochefoucauld's

Maxims," says one critic, "a bad book. As I am reading it, I feel discomfort; I have a sense of suffering which I cannot define. Such thoughts tarnish the brightness of the soul; they degrade the heart." Yet as a faithful presentation of human selfishness, and of you and me in so far as we happen to be mainly selfish, the odious mirror has its uses by showing us what manner of man we are or may become. Let us not forget either that not quite all is selfishness in La Rochefoucauld. Everybody knows his saying that hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue. There is a subtle truth in this, too,—that to be in too great a hurry to discharge an obligation is itself a kind of ingratitude. Nor is there any harm in the reflection that no fool is so troublesome as the clever fool; nor in this, that only great men have any business with great defects; nor, finally, in the consolatory saying, that we are never either so happy or so unhappy as we imagine.

No more important name is associated with the literature of aphorism than that of Pascal; but the Thoughts of Pascal concern the deeper things of speculative philosophy and religion, rather than the wisdom of daily life, and, besides, though aphoristic in form, they are in substance systematic. "I blame equally," he said, "those who take sides for praising man, those who are for blaming him, and those who amuse themselves with him: the only wise part is search for truth—search with many sighs." On man, as he exists in society, he said little; and what he said does not make us

hopeful. He saw the darker side. "If everybody knew what one says of the other, there would not be four friends left in the world." "Would you have men think well of you, then do not speak well of yourself." And so forth. If you wish to know Pascal's theory you may find it set out in brilliant verse in the opening lines of the second book of Pope's *Essay on Man.* "What a chimera is Man!" said Pascal. "What a confused chaos! What a subject of contradiction! A professed judge of all things, and yet a feeble worm of the earth; the great depository and guardian of truth, and yet a mere huddle of uncertainty; the glory and the scandal of the universe." Shakespeare was wiser and deeper when, under this quintessence of dust, he discerned what a piece of work is man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable. That serene and radiant faith is the secret, added to matchless gifts of imagination and music, why Shakespeare is the greatest of men.

There is a smart, spurious wisdom of the world which has the bitterness not of the salutary tonic but of mortal poison; and of this kind the master is Chamfort, who died during the French Revolution (and for that matter died of it), and whose little volume of thoughts is often extremely witty, always pointed, but not seldom cynical and false. "If you live among men," he said, "the heart must either break or turn to brass." "The public, the public," he cried; "how many fools does it take to make a public!" "What is celebrity? The

advantage of being known to people who don't know you."

All literatures might be ransacked in vain for a more repulsive saying than this, that "A man must swallow a toad every morning if he wishes to be quite sure of finding nothing still more disgusting before the day is over." We cannot be surprised to hear of the lady who said that a conversation with Chamfort in the morning made her melancholy until bedtime. Yet Chamfort is the author of the not unwholesome saying that "The most wasted of all days is that on which one has not laughed." One of his maxims lets us into the secret of his misanthropy. "Whoever," he said, "is not a misanthropist at forty can never have loved mankind." It is easy to know what this means. Of course if a man is so superfine that he will not love mankind any longer than he can believe them to be demigods and angels, it is true that at forty he may have discovered that they are neither. Beginning by looking for men to be more perfect than they can be, he ends by thinking them worse than they are, and then he secretly plumes himself on his superior cleverness in having found humanity out. For the deadliest of all wet blankets give me a middle-aged man who has been most of a visionary in his youth.

To correct all this, let us recall Helvétius's saying that I have already quoted, which made so deep an impression on Jeremy Bentham: "In order to love mankind, we must not expect too much from them." And let us remember that Fénelon, one of the most saintly men that ever lived, and whose very

countenance bore such a mark of goodness that when he was in a room men found they could not desist from looking at him, wrote to a friend the year before he died, " I ask little from most men ; I try to render them much, and to expect nothing in return, and I get very well out of the bargain."

Chamfort I will leave, with his sensible distinction between Pride and Vanity. " A man," he says, " has advanced far in the study of morals who has mastered the difference between pride and vanity. The first is lofty, calm, immovable ; the second is uncertain, capricious, unquiet. The one adds to a man's stature ; the other only puffs him out. The one is the source of a thousand virtues ; the other is that of nearly all vices and all perversities. There is a kind of pride in which are included all the commandments of God ; and a kind of vanity which contains the seven mortal sins."

I will say little of La Bruyère, by far the greatest, broadest, strongest, of French character-writers, because his is not one of the houses of which you can judge by a brick or two taken at random. For those in whom the excitements of modern literature have not burnt up the faculty of sober meditation on social man, La Bruyère must always be one of the foremost names. Macaulay somewhere calls him thin. But Macaulay has less ethical depth, and less perception of ethical depth, than any writer that ever lived with equally brilliant gifts in other ways ; and *thin* is the very last word that describes this admirable master. If one seeks to measure how far removed the great classic moralists are from

thinness, let him turn from La Bruyère to the inane subtleties and meaningless conundrums, not worth answering, that do duty for analysis of character in some modern American literature. We feel that La Bruyère, though retiring, studious, meditative, and self-contained, has complied with the essential condition of looking at life and men themselves, and with his own eyes. His aphoristic sayings are the least important part of him, but here are one or two examples :—

" Eminent posts make great men greater, and little men less."

" There is in some men a certain mediocrity of mind that helps to make them wise."

" The flatterer has not a sufficiently good opinion either of himself or of others."

" People from the provinces and fools are always ready to take offence, and to suppose that you are laughing at them : we should never risk a pleasantry, except with well-bred people, and people with brains."

" All confidence is dangerous, unless it is complete there are few circumstances in which it is not best either to hide all or to tell all."

" When the people is in a state of agitation, we do not see how quiet is to return ; and when it is tranquil, we do not see how the quiet is to be disturbed."

" Men count for almost nothing the virtues of the heart, and idolise gifts of body or intellect. The man who quite coolly, and with no idea that he is offending modesty, says that he is kind-hearted, constant, faithful, sincere, fair, grateful, would not dare to say that he is quick and clever, that he has fine teeth and a delicate skin."

I will say nothing of Rivarol, a caustic wit of the revolutionary time, nor of Joubert, a writer

of sayings of this century, of whom Mr. Matthew Arnold has said all that needs saying. He is delicate, refined, acute, but his thoughts were fostered in the hothouse of a coterie, and have none of the salt and sapid flavour that comes to more masculine spirits from active contact with the world.

I should prefer to close this survey in the sunnier moral climate of Vauvenargues. His own life was a pathetic failure in all the aims of outer circumstance. The chances of fortune and of health persistently baulked him, but from each stroke he rose up again, with undimmed serenity and undaunted spirit. As blow fell upon blow, the sufferer held firmly to his incessant lesson,—Be brave, persevere in the fight, struggle on, do not let go, think magnanimously of man and life, for man is good and life is affluent and fruitful. He died a hundred and forty years ago, leaving a little body of maxims behind him which, for tenderness, equanimity, cheerfulness, grace, sobriety, and hope, are not surpassed in prose literature. "One of the noblest qualities in our nature," he said, "is that we are able so easily to dispense with greater perfection."

"Magnanimity owes no account to prudence of its motives."

"To do great things a man must live as though he had never to die."

"The first days of spring have less grace than the growing virtue of a young man."

"You must rouse in men a consciousness of their own prudence and strength if you would raise their character."

Just as Tocqueville said: "He who despises man-

kind will never get the best out of either others or himself."[1]

The best known of Vauvenargues' sayings, as it is the deepest and the broadest, is the far-reaching sentence already quoted, that "Great thoughts come from the heart." And this is the truth that shines out as we watch the voyagings of humanity from the "wide, grey, lampless depths" of time. Those have been greatest in thought who have been best endowed with faith, hope, sympathy, and the spirit of effort. And next to them come the great stern, mournful men, like Tacitus, Dante, Pascal, who, standing as far aloof from the soft poetic dejection of some of the moods of Shelley or Keats as from the savage fury of Swift, watch with a prophet's indignation the heedless waste of faculty and opportunity, the triumph of paltry motive and paltry aim, as if we were the flies of a summer noon, which do more than any active malignity to distort the noble lines, and to weaken or to frustrate the strong and healthy parts, of human nature. For practical purposes all these complaints of man are of as little avail as Johnson found the complaint that of the globe so large a space should be occupied by the uninhabitable ocean, encumbered by naked mountains, lost under barren sands, scorched by perpetual heat or petrified by perpetual frost, and so small a space be left for the production of fruits, the pasture of cattle, and the accommodation of men.

[1] The reader who cares to know more about Vauvenargues will find a chapter on him in the present writer's *Miscellanies*, vol. ii.

When we have deducted, said Johnson, all the time that is absorbed in sleep, or appropriated to the other demands of nature, or the inevitable requirements of social intercourse, all that is torn from us by violence of disease, or imperceptibly stolen from us by languor, we may realise of how small a portion of our time we are truly masters. And the same consideration of the ceaseless and natural pre-occupations of men in the daily struggle will reconcile the wise man to all the disappointments, delays, shortcomings of the world, without shaking the firmness of his own faith, or the intrepidity of his own purpose.

THE DEATH OF MR. MILL

(*May* 1873)

THE tragic commonplaces of the grave sound a fuller note as we mourn for one of the greater among the servants of Humanity. A strong and pure light is gone out, the radiance of a clear vision and a beneficent purpose. One of those high and most worthy spirits who arise from time to time to stir their generation with new mental impulses in the deeper things, has perished from among us. The death of one who did so much to impress on his contemporaries that physical law works independently of moral law, marks with profounder emphasis the ever ancient and ever fresh decree that there is one end to the just and the unjust, and that the same strait tomb awaits alike the poor dead whom nature or circumstance imprisoned in mean horizons, and those who saw far and felt passionately and put their reason to noble uses. Yet the fulness of our grief is softened by a certain greatness and solemnity in the event. The teachers of men are so few, the gift of intellectual fatherhood is so rare, it is surrounded by such singular gloriousness. The loss of a powerful and generous statesman, or of a great master in letters or art, touches us with many a vivid regret. The Teacher,

the man who has talents and has virtues, and yet has a further something which is neither talent nor virtue, and which gives him the mysterious secret of drawing men after him, leaves a deeper sense of emptiness than this; but lamentation is at once soothed and elevated by a sense of sacredness in the occasion. Even those whom Mr. Mill honoured with his friendship, and who must always bear to his memory the affectionate veneration of sons, may yet feel their pain at the thought that they will see him no more, raised into a higher mood as they meditate on the loftiness of his task and the steadfastness and success with which he achieved it. If it is grievous to think that such richness of culture, such full maturity of wisdom, such passion for truth and justice, are now by a single stroke extinguished, at least we may find some not unworthy solace in the thought of the splendid purpose that they have served in keeping alive, and surrounding with new attractions, the difficult tradition of patient and accurate thinking in union with unselfish and magnanimous living.

Much will one day have to be said as to the precise value of Mr. Mill's philosophical principles, the more or less of his triumphs as a dialectician, his skill as a critic and an expositor. However this trial may go, we shall at any rate be sure that with his reputation will stand or fall the intellectual repute of a whole generation of his countrymen. The most eminent of those who are now so fast becoming the front line, as death mows down the veterans, all bear traces of his influence, whether they are avowed dis-

ciples or avowed opponents. If they did not accept his method of thinking, at least he determined the questions which they should think about. For twenty years no one at all open to serious intellectual impressions has left Oxford without having undergone the influence of Mr. Mill's teaching, though it would be too much to say that in that gray temple where they are ever burnishing new idols, his throne is still unshaken. The professorial chairs there and elsewhere are more and more being filled with men whose minds have been trained in his principles. The universities only typify his influence on the less learned part of the world. The better sort of journalists educated themselves on his books, and even the baser sort acquired a habit of quoting from them. He is the only writer in the world whose treatises on highly abstract subjects have been printed during his lifetime in editions for the people, and sold at the price of railway novels. Foreigners from all countries read his books as attentively as his most eager English disciples, and sought his opinion as to their own questions with as much reverence as if he had been a native oracle. An eminent American who came over on an official mission which brought him into contact with most of the leading statesmen throughout Europe, said to the present writer :—" The man who impressed me most of them all was Stuart Mill ; you placed before him the facts on which you sought his opinion. He took them, gave you the different ways in which they might fairly be looked at, balanced the opposing considerations, and then handed you a final judgment in which nothing was left out. His mind worked like

a splendid piece of machinery ; you supply it with raw material, and it turns you out a perfectly finished product." Of such a man England has good reason to be very proud.

He was stamped in many respects with specially English quality. He is the latest chief of a distinctively English school of philosophy, in which, as has been said, the names of Locke, Hume, Adam Smith, and Bentham (and Mr. Mill would have added James Mill) mark the line of succession—the school whose method subordinates imagination to observation, and whose doctrine lays the foundations of knowledge in experience, and the tests of conduct in utility. Yet, for all this, one of his most remarkable characteristics was less English than French ; his constant admission of an ideal and imaginative element in social speculation, and a glowing persuasion that the effort and wisdom and ingenuity of men are capable, if free opportunity be given by social arrangements, of raising human destiny to a pitch that is at present beyond our powers of conception. Perhaps the sum of all his distinction lies in this union of stern science with infinite aspiration, of rigorous sense of what is real and practicable with bright and luminous hope. He told one who was speaking of Condorcet's Life of Turgot, that in his younger days whenever he was inclined to be discouraged, he was in the habit of turning to this book, and that he never did so without recovering possession of himself. To the same friend, who had printed something comparing Mr. Mill's repulse at Westminster with the dismissal of the great minister of Lewis the Sixteenth, he wrote :—" I

never received so gratifying a compliment as the comparison of me to Turgot; it is indeed an honour to me that such an assimilation should have occurred to you." Those who have studied the character of one whom even the rigid Austin thought worthy to be called "the godlike Turgot," know both the nobleness and the rarity of this type.

Its force lies not in single elements, but in that combination of an ardent interest in human improvement with a reasoned attention to the law of its conditions, which alone deserves to be honoured with the high name of wisdom. This completeness was one of the secrets of Mr. Mill's peculiar attraction for young men, and for the comparatively few women whose intellectual interest was strong enough to draw them to his books. He satisfied the ingenuous moral ardour which is instinctive in the best natures, until the dust of daily life dulls or extinguishes it, and at the same time he satisfied the rationalistic qualities, which are not less marked in the youthful temperament of those who by and by do the work of the world. This mixture of intellectual gravity with a passionate love of improvement in all the aims and instruments of life, made many intelligences alive who would otherwise have slumbered, or sunk either into a dry pedantry on the one hand, or a windy, mischievous philanthropy on the other. He showed himself so wholly free from the vulgarity of the sage. He could hope for the future without taking his eye from the realities of the present. He recognised the social destination of knowledge, and kept the elevation of the great art of social existence ever

before him, as the ultimate end of all speculative activity.

Another side of this rare combination was his union of courage with patience, of firm nonconformity with silent conformity. Compliance is always a question of degree, depending on time, circumstance, and subject. Mr. Mill hit the exact mean, equally distant from timorous caution and self-indulgent violence. He was unrivalled in the difficult art of conciliating as much support as was possible and alienating as little sympathy as possible, for novel and extremely unpopular opinions. He was not one of those who strive to spread new faiths by brilliant swordplay with buttoned foils, and he was not one of those who run amuck among the idols of the tribe and the market-place and the theatre. He knew how to kindle the energy of all who were likely to be persuaded by his reasoning, without stimulating in a corresponding degree the energy of persons whose convictions he attacked. Thus he husbanded the strength of truth, and avoided wasteful friction. Probably no English writer that ever lived has done so much as Mr. Mill to cut at the very root of the theological spirit, yet there is only one passage in the writings published during his lifetime—I mean a well-known passage in the Liberty—which could give any offence to the most devout person. His conformity, one need hardly say, never went beyond the negative degree, nor ever passed beyond the conformity of silence. That guilty and grievously common pusillanimity which leads men to make or act hypocritical professions, always moved his deepest abhorrence.

And he did not fear publicly to testify his interest in the return of an atheist to parliament.

His courage was not of the spurious kinds arising from anger, or ignorance of the peril, or levity, or a reckless confidence. These are all very easy. His distinction was that he knew all the danger to himself, was anxious to save pain to others, was buoyed up by no rash hope that the world was to be permanently bettered at a stroke, and yet for all this he knew how to present an undaunted front to a majority. The only fear he ever knew was fear lest a premature or excessive utterance should harm a good cause. He had measured the prejudices of men, and his desire to arouse this obstructive force in the least degree compatible with effective advocacy of any improvement, set the single limit to his intrepidity. Prejudices were to him like physical predispositions, with which you have to make your account. He knew, too, that they are often bound up with the most valuable elements in character and life, and hence he feared that violent surgery which in eradicating a false opinion fatally bruises at the same time a true and wholesome feeling that may cling to it. The patience which with some men is an instinct, and with others a fair name for indifference, was with him an acquisition of reason and conscience.

The value of this wise and virtuous mixture of boldness with tolerance, of courageous speech with courageous reserve, has been enormous. Along with his direct pleas for freedom of thought and freedom of speech, it has been the chief source of that liberty of expressing unpopular opinions in this country

without social persecution, which is now so nearly complete, that he himself was at last astonished by it. The manner of his dialectic, firm and vigorous as the dialectic was in matter, has gradually introduced mitigating elements into the atmosphere of opinion. Partly, no doubt, the singular tolerance of free discussion which now prevails in England—I do not mean that it is at all perfect—arises from the prevalent scepticism, from indifference, and from the influence of some of the more high-minded of the clergy. But Mr. Mill's steadfast abstinence from drawing wholesale indictments against persons or classes whose opinions he controverted, his generous candour, his scrupulous respect for any germ of good in whatever company it was found, and his large allowances, contributed positive elements to what might otherwise have been the negative tolerance that comes of moral stagnation. Tolerance of distasteful notions in others became associated in his person at once with the widest enlightenment, and the strongest conviction of the truth of our own notions.

His career, beside all else, was a protest of the simplest and loftiest kind against some of the most degrading features of our society. No one is more alive than he was to the worth of all that adds grace and dignity to human life; but the sincerity of this feeling filled him with aversion for the make-believe dignity of a luxurious and artificial community. Without either arrogance or bitterness, he stood aloof from that conventional intercourse which is misnamed social duty. Without either discourtesy

or cynicism, he refused to play a part in that dance of mimes which passes for life among the upper classes. In him, to extraordinary intellectual attainments was added the gift of a firm and steadfast self-respect, which unfortunately does not always go with them. He felt the reality of things, and it was easier for a workman than for a princess to obtain access to him. It is not always the men who talk most affectingly about our being all of one flesh and blood, who are proof against those mysterious charms of superior rank, which do so much to foster unworthy conceptions of life in English society; and there are many people capable of accepting Mr. Mill's social principles, and the theoretical corollaries they contain, who yet would condemn his manly plainness and austere consistency in acting on them. The too common tendency in us all to moral slovenliness, and a lazy contentment with a little flaccid protest against evil, finds a constant rebuke in his career. The indomitable passion for justice which made him strive so long and so tenaciously to bring to judgment a public official, whom he conceived to be a great criminal, was worthy of one of the stoutest patriots in our seventeenth-century history. The same moral thoroughness stirred the same indignation in him on a more recent occasion, when he declared it "a permanent disgrace to the Government that the iniquitous sentence on the gas-stokers was not remitted as soon as passed."

Much of his most striking quality was owing to the exceptional degree in which he was alive to the

constant tendency of society to lose some excellence of aim, to relapse at some point from the standard of truth and right which had been reached by long previous effort, to fall back in height of moral ideal. He was keenly sensible that it is only by persistent striving after improvement in our conceptions of duty, and improvement in the external means for realising them, that even the acquisitions of past generations are retained. He knew the intense difficulty of making life better by ever so little. Hence at once the exaltation of his own ideas of truth and right, and his eagerness to conciliate anything like virtuous social feeling, in whatever intellectual or political association he found it. Hence also the vehemence of his passion for the unfettered and unchecked development of new ideas on all subjects, of originality in moral and social points of view; because repression, whether by public opinion or in any other way, may be the means of untold waste of gifts that might have conferred on mankind unspeakable benefits. The discipline and vigour of his understanding made him the least indulgent of judges to anything like charlatanry, and effectually prevented his unwillingness to let the smallest good element be lost, from degenerating into that weak kind of universalism which nullifies some otherwise good men.

Some great men seize upon us by the force of an imposing and majestic authority; their thoughts impress the imagination, their words are winged, they are as prophets bearing high testimony that cannot be gainsaid. Bossuet, for instance, or Pascal. Others,

and of these Mr. Mill was one, acquire disciples not by a commanding authority, but by a moderate and impersonal kind of persuasion. He appeals not to our sense of greatness and power in a teacher, which is noble, but to our love of finding and embracing truth for ourselves, which is still nobler. People who like their teacher to be as a king publishing decrees with herald and trumpet, perhaps find Mr. Mill colourless. Yet this habitual effacement of his own personality marked a delicate and very rare shade in his reverence for the sacred purity of truth.

Meditation on the influence of one who has been the foremost instructor of his time in wisdom and goodness quickly breaks off, in this hour when his loss is fresh upon us; it changes into affectionate reminiscences for which silence is more fitting. In such an hour thought turns rather to the person than the work of the master whom we mourn. We recall his simplicity, gentleness, heroic self-abnegation; his generosity in encouraging, his eager readiness in helping; the warm kindliness of his accost, the friendly brightening of the eye. The last time I saw him was a few days before he left England.[1] He came to spend a day with me in the country, of which the following brief notes happened to be written at the time in a letter to a friend:—

"He came down by the morning train to Guildford station, where I was waiting for him. He was in his most even and mellow humour. We walked in a leisurely way

[1] April 5, 1873.

and through roundabout tracks for some four hours along the ancient green road which you know, over the high grassy downs, into old chalk pits picturesque with juniper and yew, across heaths and commons, and so up to our windy promontory, where the majestic prospect stirred him with lively delight. You know he is a fervent botanist, and every ten minutes he stooped to look at this or that on the path. Unluckily I am ignorant of the very rudiments of the matter, so his parenthetic enthusiasms were lost upon me.

"Of course he talked, and talked well. He admitted that Goethe had added new points of view to life, but has a deep dislike of his moral character; wondered how a man who could draw the sorrows of a deserted woman like Aurelia, in *Wilhelm Meister*, should yet have behaved so systematically ill to women. Goethe tried as hard as he could to be a Greek, yet his failure to produce anything perfect in form, except a few lyrics, proves the irresistible expansion of the modern spirit, and the inadequateness of the Greek type to modern needs of activity and expression. Greatly prefers Schiller in all respects; turning to him from Goethe is like going into the fresh air from a hot-house.

"Spoke of style: thinks Goldsmith unsurpassed; then Addison comes. Greatly dislikes the style of Junius and of Gibbon; indeed, thinks meanly of the latter in all respects, except for his research, which alone of the work of that century stands the test of nineteenth-century criticism. Did not agree with me that George Sand's is the high-water mark of prose, but yet could not name anybody higher, and admitted that her prose stirs you like music.

"Seemed disposed to think that the most feasible solution of the Irish University question is a Catholic

University, the restrictive and obscurantist tendencies of which you may expect to have checked by the active competition of life with men trained in more enlightened systems. Spoke of Home Rule.

"Made remarks on the difference in the feeling of modern refusers of Christianity as compared with that of men like his father, impassioned deniers, who believed that if only you broke up the power of the priests and checked superstition, all would go well—a dream from which they were partially awakened by seeing that the French revolution, which overthrew the Church, still did not bring the millennium. His radical friends used to be very angry with him for loving Wordsworth. 'Wordsworth,' I used to say, 'is against you, no doubt, in the battle which you are now waging, but after you have won, the world will need more than ever those qualities which Wordsworth is keeping alive and nourishing.' In his youth mere negation of religion was a firm bond of union, social and otherwise, between men who agreed in nothing else.

"Spoke of the modern tendency to pure theism, and met the objection that it retards improvement by turning the minds of some of the best men from social affairs, by the counter-proposition that it is useful to society, apart from the question of its truth,—useful as a provisional belief, because people will identify serviceable ministry to men with service of God. Thinks we cannot with any sort of precision define the coming modification of religion, but anticipates that it will undoubtedly rest upon the solidarity of mankind, as Comte said, and as you and I believe. Perceives two things, at any rate, which are likely to lead men to invest this with the moral authority of a religion; first, they will become more and more impressed by the awful fact that a piece of conduct to-day may prove a curse to men and women scores and even

hundreds of years after the author of it is dead; and second, they will more and more feel that they can only satisfy their sentiment of gratitude to seen or unseen benefactors, can only repay the untold benefits they have inherited, by diligently maintaining the traditions of service.

"And so forth, full of interest and suggestiveness all through. When he got here, he chatted to R—— over our lunch, with something of the simple amiableness of a child, about the wild flowers, the ways of insects, and notes of birds. He was impatient for the song of the nightingale. Then I drove him to our little roadside station, and one of the most delightful days of my life came to its end, like all other days, delightful and sorrowful."

Alas, the sorrowful day which ever dogs our delight followed very quickly. The nightingale that he longed for fills the darkness with music, but not for the ear of the dead master: he rests in the deeper darkness where the silence is unbroken for ever. We may console ourselves with the reflection offered by the dying Socrates to his sorrowful companions: he who has arrayed the soul in her own proper jewels of moderation and justice and courage and nobleness and truth, is ever ready for the journey when his time comes. We have lost a great teacher and example of knowledge and virtue, but men will long feel the presence of his character about them, making them ashamed of what is indolent or selfish, and encouraging them to all disinterested labour, both in trying to do good and in trying to find out what the good is,—which is harder.

MACAULAY

"AFTER glancing my eye over the design and order of a new book," says Gibbon, "I suspend the perusal till I had finished the task of self-examination, till I had resolved in a solitary walk all that I knew or believed or had thought on the subject of the whole work or of some particular chapter; I was then qualified to discern how much the author added to my original stock; and if I was sometimes satisfied by the agreement, I was sometimes warned by the opposition of our ideas." It is also told of Strafford that before reading any book for the first time, he would call for a sheet of paper, and then proceed to write down upon it some sketch of the ideas that he already had upon the subject of the book, and of the questions that he expected to find answered. No one who has been at the pains to try the experiment, will doubt the usefulness of this practice: it gives to our acquisitions from books clearness and reality, a right place and an independent shape. At this moment we are all looking for the biography of an illustrious man of letters, written by a near kinsman, who is himself naturally endowed with keen literary interests, and who has invigorated his academic cultivation by practical engagement in considerable affairs of public

business. Before taking up Mr. Trevelyan's two volumes, it is perhaps worth while, on Strafford's plan, to ask ourselves shortly what kind of significance or value belongs to Lord Macaulay's achievements, and to what place he has a claim among the forces of English literature. It is seventeen years since he died, and those of us who never knew him nor ever saw him, may now think about his work with that perfect detachment which is impossible in the case of actual contemporaries.[1]

That Macaulay comes in the very front rank in the mind of the ordinary bookbuyer of our day is quite certain. It is amusement with some people to put an imaginary case of banishment to a desert island, with the privilege of choosing the works of one author, and no more than one, to furnish literary companionship and refreshment for the rest of a lifetime. Whom would one select for this momentous

[1] Since the following piece was written, Mr. Trevelyan's biography of Lord Macaulay has appeared, and has enjoyed the great popularity to which its careful execution, its brightness of style, its good taste, its sound judgment, so richly entitle it. If Mr. Trevelyan's course in politics were not so useful as it is, one might be tempted to regret that he had not chosen literature for the main field of his career. The portrait which he draws of Lord Macaulay is so irresistibly attractive in many ways, that a critic may be glad to have delivered his soul before his judgment was subject to a dangerous bias, by the picture of Macaulay's personal character—its domestic amiability, its benevolence to unlucky followers of letters, its manliness, its high public spirit and generous patriotism. On reading my criticism over again, I am well pleased to find that not an epithet needs to be altered,—so independent is opinion as to this strong man's work, of our esteem for his loyal and upright character.

post? Clearly the author must be voluminous, for days on desert islands are many and long; he must be varied in his moods, his topics, and his interests; he must have a great deal to say, and must have a power of saying it that shall arrest a depressed and dolorous spirit. Englishmen, of course, would with mechanical unanimity call for Shakespeare; Germans could hardly hesitate about Goethe; and a sensible Frenchman would pack up the ninety volumes of Voltaire. It would be at least as interesting to know the object of a second choice, supposing the tyrant in his clemency to give us two authors. In the case of Englishmen there is some evidence as to a popular preference. A recent traveller in Australia informs us that the three books which he found on every squatter's shelf, and which at last he knew before he crossed the threshold that he should be sure to find, were Shakespeare, the Bible, and Macaulay's Essays. This is only an illustration of a feeling about Macaulay that has been almost universal among the English-speaking peoples.

We may safely say that no man obtains and keeps for a great many years such a position as this, unless he is possessed of some very extraordinary qualities, or else of common qualities in a very uncommon and extraordinary degree. The world, says Goethe, is more willing to endure the Incongruous than to be patient under the Insignificant. Even those who set least value on what Macaulay does for his readers, may still feel bound to distinguish the elements that have given him his vast popularity. The inquiry is not a piece of merely literary criticism, for it is

impossible that the work of so imposing a writer should have passed through the hands of every man and woman of his time who has even the humblest pretensions to cultivation, without leaving a very decided mark on their habits both of thought and expression. As a plain matter of observation, it is impossible to take up a newspaper or a review, for instance, without perceiving Macaulay's influence both in the style and the temper of modern journalism, and journalism in its turn acts upon the style and temper of its enormous uncounted public. The man who now succeeds in catching the ear of the writers of leading articles, is in the position that used to be held by the head of some great theological school, whence disciples swarmed forth to reproduce in ten thousand pulpits the arguments, the opinions, the images, the tricks, the postures, and the mannerisms of a single master.

Two men of very different kinds have thoroughly impressed the journalists of our time, Macaulay and Mr. Mill. Mr. Carlyle we do not add to them; he is, as the Germans call Jean Paul, *der Einzige*. And he is a poet, while the other two are in their degrees serious and argumentative writers, dealing in different ways with the great topics that constitute the matter and business of daily discussion. They are both of them practical enough to interest men handling real affairs, and yet they are general or theoretical enough to supply such men with the large and ready commonplaces which are so useful to a profession that has to produce literary graces and philosophical decorations at an hour's notice. It might perhaps be said of these

two distinguished men that our public writers owe most of their virtues to the one, and most of their vices to the other. If Mill taught some of them to reason, Macaulay tempted more of them to declaim: if Mill set an example of patience, tolerance, and fair examination of hostile opinions, Macaulay did much to encourage oracular arrogance, and a rather too thrasonical complacency; if Mill sowed ideas of the great economic, political, and moral bearings of the forces of society, Macaulay trained a taste for superficial particularities, trival circumstantialities of local colour, and all the paraphernalia of the pseudo-picturesque.

Of course nothing so obviously untrue is meant as that this is an account of Macaulay's own quality. What is empty pretension in the leading article, was often a warranted self-assertion in Macaulay; what in it is little more than testiness, is in him often a generous indignation. What became and still remain in those who have made him their model, substantive and organic vices, the foundation of literary character and intellectual temper, were in him the incidental defects of a vigorous genius. And we have to take a man of his power and vigour with all his drawbacks, for the one are wrapped up in the other. Charles Fox used to apply to Burke a passage that Quintilian wrote about Ovid. "Si animi sui affectibus temperare quam indulgere maluisset," quoted Fox, "quid vir iste præstare non potuerit!" But this is really not at all certain either of Ovid, or Burke, or any one else. It suits moralists to tell us that excellence lies in the happy mean and nice balance of our faculties and impulses,

and perhaps in so far as our own contentment and an easy passage through life are involved, what they tell us is true. But for making a mark in the world, for rising to supremacy in art or thought or affairs—whatever those aims may be worth—a man possibly does better to indulge, rather than to chide or grudge, his genius, and to pay the penalties for his weakness, rather than run any risk of mutilating those strong faculties of which they happen to be an inseparable accident. Versatility is not a universal gift among the able men of the world; not many of them have so many gifts of the spirit, as to be free to choose by what pass they will climb "the steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar." If Macaulay had applied himself to the cultivation of a balanced judgment, of tempered phrases, and of relative propositions, he would probably have sunk into an impotent tameness. A great pugilist has sometimes been converted from the error of his ways, and been led zealously to cherish gospel graces, but the hero's discourses have seldom had the notes of unction and edification. Macaulay, divested of all the exorbitancies of his spirit and his style, would have been a Samson shorn of the locks of his strength.

Although, however, a writer of marked quality may do well to let his genius develop its spontaneous forces without too assiduous or vigilant repression, trusting to other writers of equal strength in other directions, and to the general fitness of things and operation of time, to redress the balance, still it is the task of criticism in counting up the contributions of one of these strong men to examine the mischiefs

no less than the benefits incident to their work. There is no puny carping nor cavilling in the process. It is because such men are strong that they are able to do harm; they may injure the taste and judgment of a whole generation, just because they are never mediocre. That is implied in strength. Macaulay is not to be measured now merely as if he were the author of a new book. His influence has been a distinct literary force, and in an age of reading, this is to be a distinct force in deciding the temper, the process, the breadth, of men's opinions, no less than the manner of expressing them. It is no new observation that the influence of an author becomes in time something apart from his books: a certain generalised or abstract personality impresses itself on our minds, long after we have forgotten the details of his opinions, the arguments by which he enforced them, and even, what are usually the last to escape us, the images by which he illustrated them. Phrases and sentences are a mask: but we detect the features of the man behind the mask. This personality of a favourite author is a real and powerful agency. Unconsciously we are infected with his humours; we apply his methods; we find ourselves copying the rhythm and measure of his periods; we wonder how he would have acted, or thought, or spoken in our circumstances. Usually a strong writer leaves a special mark in some particular region of mental activity: the final product of him is to fix some persistent religious mood, or some decisive intellectual bias, or else some trick of the tongue. Now Macaulay has contributed no philosophic ideas to the speculative

stock, nor has he developed any one great historic or social truth. His work is always full of a high spirit of manliness, probity, and honour; but he is not of that small band to whom we may apply Mackintosh's thrice and four times enviable panegyric on the eloquence of Dugald Stewart, that its peculiar glory consisted in having "breathed the love of virtue into whole generations of pupils." He has painted many striking pictures, and imparted a certain reality to our conception of many great scenes of the past. He did good service in banishing once for all those sentimental Jacobite leanings and prejudices which had been kept alive by the sophistry of the most popular of historians, and the imagination of the most popular of romance writers. But where he set his stamp has been upon style; style in its widest sense, not merely on the grammar and mechanism of writing, but on what De Quincey described as its *organology*; style, that is to say, in its relation to ideas and feelings, its commerce with thought, and its reaction on what one may call the temper or conscience of the intellect.

Let no man suppose that it matters little whether the most universally popular of the serious authors of a generation—and Macaulay was nothing less than this—affects *style coupé* or *style soutenu*. The critic of style is not the dancing-master, declaiming on the deep ineffable things that lie in a minuet. He is not the virtuoso of supines and gerundives. The morality of style goes deeper "than dull fools suppose." When Comte took pains to prevent any sentence from exceeding two lines of his manuscript or five of print; to restrict every paragraph to seven sentences; to

exclude every hiatus between two sentences, or even between two paragraphs ; and never to reproduce any word, except the auxiliary monosyllables, in two consecutive sentences ; he justified his literary solicitude by insisting on the wholesomeness alike to heart and intelligence of submission to artificial institutions. He felt, after he had once mastered the habit of the new yoke, that it became the source of continual and unforeseeable improvements even in thought, and he perceived that the reason why verse is a higher kind of literary perfection than prose, is that verse imposes a greater number of rigorous forms. We may add that verse itself is perfected, in the hands of men of poetic genius, in proportion to the severity of this mechanical regulation. Where Pope or Racine had one rule of metre, Victor Hugo has twenty, and he observes them as rigorously as an algebraist or an astronomer observes the rules of calculation or demonstration. One, then, who touches the style of a generation acquires no trifling authority over its thought and temper, as well as over the length of its sentences.

The first and most obvious secret of Macaulay's place on popular bookshelves is that he has a true genius for narration, and narration will always, in the eyes, not only of our squatters in the Australian bush, but of the many all over the world, stand first among literary gifts. The common run of plain men, as has been noticed since the beginning of the world, are as eager as children for a story, and like children they will embrace the man who will tell them a story, with

abundance of details and plenty of colour, and a realistic assurance that it is no mere make-believe. Macaulay never stops to brood over an incident or a character, with an inner eye intent on penetrating to the lowest depth of motive and cause, to the furthest complexity of impulse, calculation, and subtle incentive. The spirit of analysis is not in him, and the divine spirit of meditation is not in him. His whole mind runs in action and movement; it busies itself with eager interest in all objective particulars. He is seized by the external and the superficial, and revels in every detail that appeals to the five senses. "The brilliant Macaulay," said Emerson, with slight exaggeration, "who expresses the tone of the English governing classes of the day, explicitly teaches that good *means* good to eat, good to wear, material commodity." So ready a faculty of exultation in the exceeding great glories of taste and touch, of loud sound and glittering spectacle, is a gift of the utmost service to the narrator who craves immense audiences. Let it be said that if Macaulay exults in the details that go to our five senses, his sensuousness is always clean, manly, and fit for the honest daylight and the summer sun. There is none of that curious odour of autumnal decay that clings to the passion of a more modern school for colour and flavour and the enumerated treasures of subtle indulgence.

Mere picturesqueness, however, is a minor qualification compared with another quality which everybody assumes himself to have, but which is in reality extremely uncommon; the quality, I mean, of telling a tale directly and in straightforward order. In

speaking of Hallam, Macaulay complained that Gibbon had brought into fashion an unpleasant trick of telling a story by implication and allusion. This provoking obliquity has certainly increased rather than declined since Hallam's day. Mr. Froude, it is true, whatever may be his shortcomings on the side of sound moral and political judgment, has admirable gifts in the way of straightforward narration, and Mr. Freeman, when he does not press too hotly after emphasis, and abstains from overloading his account with super-abundance of detail, is usually excellent in the way of direct description. Still, it is not merely because these two writers are alive and Macaulay is not, that most people would say of him that he is unequalled in our time in his mastery of the art of letting us know in an express and unmistakable way exactly what it was that happened; though it is quite true that in many portions of his too elaborated History of William the Third he describes a large number of events about which, I think, no sensible man can in the least care either how they happened, or whether indeed they happened at all or not.

Another reason why people have sought Macaulay is, that he has in one way or another something to tell them about many of the most striking personages and interesting events in the history of mankind. And he does really tell them something. If any one will be at the trouble to count up the number of those names that belong to the world and time, about which Macaulay has found not merely something, but something definite and pointed to say, he will be astonished to see how large a portion of the wide

historic realm is traversed in that ample flight of reference, allusion, and illustration, and what unsparing copiousness of knowledge gives substance, meaning, and attraction to that resplendent blaze of rhetoric.

Macaulay came upon the world of letters just as the middle classes were expanding into enormous prosperity, were vastly increasing in numbers, and were becoming more alive than they had ever been before to literary interests. His Essays are as good as a library: they make an incomparable manual and vade-mecum for a busy uneducated man, who has curiosity and enlightenment enough to wish to know a little about the great lives and great thoughts, the shining words and many-coloured complexities of action, that have marked the journey of man through the ages. Macaulay had an intimate acquaintance both with the imaginative literature and the history of Greece and Rome, with the literature and the history of modern Italy, of France, and of England. Whatever his special subject, he contrives to pour into it with singular dexterity a stream of rich, graphic, and telling illustrations from all these widely diversified sources. Figures from history, ancient and modern, sacred and secular; characters from plays and novels from Plautus down to Walter Scott and Jane Austen; images and similes from poets of every age and every nation, "pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical;" shrewd thrusts from satirists, wise saws from sages, pleasantries caustic or pathetic from humorists; all these throng Macaulay's pages with the bustle and

variety and animation of some glittering masque and cosmoramic revel of great books and heroical men. Hence, though Macaulay was in mental constitution one of the very least Shakesperean writers that ever lived, yet he has the Shakesperean quality of taking his reader through an immense gallery of interesting characters and striking situations. No writer can now expect to attain the widest popularity as a man of letters unless he gives to the world *multa* as well as *multum*. Sainte-Beuve, the most eminent man of letters in France in our generation, wrote no less than twenty-seven volumes of his incomparable *Causeries*. Mr. Carlyle, the most eminent man of letters in England in our generation, has taught us that silence is golden in thirty volumes. Macaulay was not so exuberantly copious as these two illustrious writers, but he had the art of being as various without being so voluminous.

There has been a great deal of deliberate and systematic imitation of Macaulay's style, often by clever men who might well have trusted to their own resources. Its most conspicuous vices are very easy to imitate, but it is impossible for any one who is less familiar with literature than Macaulay was, to reproduce his style effectively, for the reason that it is before all else the style of great literary knowledge. Nor is that all. Macaulay's knowledge was not only very wide; it was both thoroughly accurate and instantly ready. For this stream of apt illustrations he was indebted to his extraordinary memory, and his rapid eye for contrasts and analogies. They come to the end of his pen as he writes; they are not

laboriously hunted out in indexes, and then added by way of afterthought and extraneous interpolation. Hence quotations and references that in a writer even of equal knowledge, but with his wits less promptly about him, would seem mechanical and awkward, find their place in a page of Macaulay as if by a delightful process of complete assimilation and spontaneous fusion.

We may be sure that no author could have achieved Macaulay's boundless popularity among his contemporaries, unless his work had abounded in what is substantially Commonplace. Addison puts fine writing in sentiments that are natural without being obvious, and this is a true account of the " law " of the exquisite literature of the Queen Anne men. We may perhaps add to Addison's definition, that the great secret of the best kind of popularity is always the noble or imaginative handling of Commonplace. Shakespeare may at first seem an example to the contrary ; and indeed is it not a standing marvel that the greatest writer of a nation that is distinguished among all nations for the pharisaism, puritanism, and unimaginative narrowness of its judgments on conduct and type of character, should be paramount over all writers for the breadth, maturity, fulness, subtlety, and infinite variousness of his conception of human life and nature ? One possible answer to the perplexity is that the puritanism does not go below the surface in us, and that Englishmen are not really limited in their view by the too strait formulas that are supposed to contain their explanations of the moral universe.

On this theory the popular appreciation of Shakespeare is the irrepressible response of the hearty inner man to a voice, in which he recognises the full note of human nature, and those wonders of the world which are not dreamt of in his professed philosophy. A more obvious answer than this is that Shakespeare's popularity with the many is not due to those finer glimpses that are the very essence of all poetic delight to the few, but to his thousand other magnificent attractions, and above all, after his skill as a pure dramatist and master of scenic interest and situation, to the lofty or pathetic setting with which he vivifies, not the subtleties or refinements, but the commonest and most elementary traits of the commonest and most elementary human moods. The few with minds touched by nature or right cultivation to the finer issues, admire the supreme genius which takes some poor Italian tale, with its coarse plot and gross personages, and shooting it through with threads of variegated meditation, produces a masterpiece of penetrative reflection and high pensive suggestion as to the deepest things and most secret parts of the life of men. But to the general these finer threads are indiscernible. What touches them in the Shakespearean poetry, and most rightly touches them and us all, are topics eternally old, yet of eternal freshness, the perennial truisms of the grave and the bride-chamber, of shifting fortune, of the surprises of destiny, and the emptiness of the answered vow. This is the region in which the poet wins his widest if not his hardest triumphs, the region of the noble Commonplace.

A writer dealing with such matters as principally occupied Macaulay, has not the privilege of resort to these great poetic inspirations. Yet history, too, has its generous commonplaces, its plausibilities of emotion, and no one has ever delighted more than Macaulay did, to appeal to the fine truisms that cluster round love of freedom and love of native land. The high rhetorical topics of liberty and patriotism are his readiest instruments for kindling a glowing reflection of these magnanimous passions in the breasts of his readers. That Englishman is hardly to be envied who can read without a glow such passages as that in the History, about Turenne being startled by the shout of stern exultation with which his English allies advanced to the combat, and expressing the delight of a true soldier when he learned that it was ever the fashion of Cromwell's pikemen to rejoice greatly when they beheld the enemy; while even the banished cavaliers felt an emotion of national pride when they saw a brigade of their countrymen, outnumbered by foes and abandoned by friends, drive before it in headlong rout the finest infantry of Spain, and force a passage into a counter-scrap which had just been pronounced impregnable by the ablest of the marshals of France. Such prose as this is not less thrilling to a man who loves his country, than the spirited verse of the Lays of Ancient Rome. And the commonplaces of patriotism and freedom would never have been so powerful in Macaulay's hands, if they had not been inspired by a sincere and hearty faith in them in the soul of the writer. His unanalytical turn of mind kept him free

of any temptation to think of love of country as a prejudice, or a passion for freedom as an illusion. The cosmopolitan or international idea which such teachers as Cobden have tried to impress on our stubborn islanders, would have found in Macaulay not lukewarm or sceptical adherence, but point-blank opposition and denial. He believed as stoutly in the supremacy of Great Britain in the history of the good causes of Europe, as M. Thiers believes in the supremacy of France, or Mazzini believed in that of Italy. The thought of the prodigious industry, the inventiveness, the stout enterprise, the free government, the wise and equal laws, the noble literature, of this fortunate island and its majestic empire beyond the seas, and the discretion, valour, and tenacity by which all these great material and still greater intangible possessions had been first won, and then kept, against every hostile comer whether domestic or foreign, sent through Macaulay a thrill, like that which the thought of Paris and its heroisms moves in the great poet of France, or sight of the dear city of the Violet Crown moved in an Athenian of old. Thus habitually, with all sincerity of heart, to offer to one of the greater popular prepossessions the incense due to any other idol of superstition, sacred and of indisputable authority, and to let this adoration be seen shining in every page, is one of the keys that every man must find, who would make a quick and sure way into the temple of contemporary fame.

It is one of the first things to be said about Macaulay, that he was in exact accord with the

common average sentiment of his day on every subject on which he spoke. His superiority was not of that highest kind which leads a man to march in thought on the outside margin of the crowd, watching them, sympathising with them, hoping for them, but apart. Macaulay was one of the middle-class crowd in his heart, and only rose above it by splendid attainments and extraordinary gifts of expression. He had none of that ambition which inflames some hardy men, to make new beliefs and new passions enter the minds of their neighbours; his ascendency is due to literary pomp, not to fecundity of spirit. No one has ever surpassed him in the art of combining resolute and ostentatious common sense of a slightly coarse sort in choosing his point of view, with so considerable an appearance of dignity and elevation in setting it forth and impressing it upon others. The elaborateness of his style is very likely to mislead people into imagining for him a corresponding elaborateness of thought and sentiment. On the contrary, Macaulay's mind was really very simple, strait, and with as few notes in its register, to borrow a phrase from the language of vocal compass, as there are few notes, though they are very loud, in the register of his written prose. When we look more closely into it, what at first wore the air of dignity and elevation, in truth rather disagreeably resembles the narrow assurance of a man who knows that he has with him the great battalions of public opinion. We are always quite sure that if Macaulay had been an Athenian citizen towards the ninety-fifth Olympiad, he would have taken sides with Anytus and Meletus

in the impeachment of Socrates. A popular author must, in a through-going way, take the accepted maxims for granted. He must suppress any whimsical fancy for applying the Socratic elenchus, or any other engine of criticism, scepticism, or verification, to those sentiments or current precepts of morals, which may in truth be very equivocal and may be much neglected in practice, but which the public opinion of his time requires to be treated in theory and in literature as if they had been cherished and held sacred *semper, ubique, et ab omnibus.*

This is just what Macaulay does, and it is commonly supposed to be no heavy fault in him or any other writer for the common public. Man cannot live by analysis alone, nor nourish himself on the secret delights of irony. And if Macaulay had only reflected the more generous of the prejudices of mankind, it would have been well enough. Burke, for instance, was a writer who revered the prejudices of a modern society as deeply as Macaulay did; he believed society to be founded on prejudices and held compact by them. Yet what size there is in Burke, what fine perspective, what momentum, what edification! It may be pleaded that there is the literature of edification, and there is the literature of knowledge, and that the qualities proper to the one cannot lawfully be expected from the other, and would only be very much out of place if they should happen to be found there. But there are two answers to this. First, Macaulay in the course of his varied writings discusses all sorts of ethical and other matters, and is not simply a chronicler of party and intrigue, of

dynasties and campaigns. Second, and more than this, even if he had never travelled beyond the composition of historical record, he could still have sown his pages, as does every truly great writer, no matter what his subject may be, with those significant images or far-reaching suggestions, which suddenly light up a whole range of distant thoughts and sympathies within us; which in an instant affect the sensibilities of men with a something new and unforeseen; and which awaken, if only for a passing moment, the faculty and response of the diviner mind. Tacitus does all this, and Burke does it, and that is why men who care nothing for Roman despots or for Jacobin despots, will still perpetually turn to those writers almost as if they were on the level of great poets or very excellent spiritual teachers.

One secret is that they, and all such men as they were, had that of which Macaulay can hardly have had the rudimentary germ, the faculty of deep abstract meditation and surrender to the fruitful "leisures of the spirit." We can picture Macaulay talking, or making a speech in the House of Commons, or buried in a book, or scouring his library for references, or covering his blue foolscap with dashing periods, or accentuating his sentences and barbing his phrases; but can anybody think of him as meditating, as modestly pondering and wondering, as possessed for so much as ten minutes by that spirit of inwardness, which has never been wholly wanting in any of those kings and princes of literature, with whom it is good for men to sit in counsel? He seeks Truth, not as she should be sought, devoutly, tentatively, and with

the air of one touching the hem of a sacred garment, but clutching her by the hair of the head and dragging her after him in a kind of boisterous triumph, a prisoner of war and not a goddess.

All this finds itself reflected, as the inner temper of a man always is reflected, in his style of written prose. The merits of Macaulay's prose are obvious enough. It naturally reproduces the good qualities of his understanding, its strength, manliness, and directness. That exultation in material goods and glories of which we have already spoken, makes his pages rich in colour, and gives them the effect of a sumptuous gala-suit. Certainly the brocade is too brand-new, and has none of the delicate charm that comes to such finery when it is a little faded. Again, nobody can have any excuse for not knowing exactly what it is that Macaulay means. We may assuredly say of his prose what Boileau says of his own poetry—" Et mon vers, bien ou mal, dit toujours quelque chose." This is a prodigious merit, when we reflect with what fatal alacrity human language lends itself in the hands of so many performers upon the pliant instrument, to all sorts of obscurity, ambiguity, disguise, and pretentious mystification. Scaliger is supposed to have remarked of the Basques and their desperate tongue: " 'Tis said the Basques understand one another; for my part, I will never believe it." The same pungent doubt might apply to loftier members of the hierarchy of speech than the forlorn dialect, but never to English as handled by Macaulay. He never wrote an obscure sentence in his life, and this may seem a small merit, until

we remember of how few writers we could say the same.

Macaulay is of those who think prose as susceptible of polished and definite form as verse, and he was, we should suppose, of those also who hold the type and mould of all written language to be spoken language. There are more reasons for demurring to the soundness of the latter doctrine, than can conveniently be made to fill a digression here. For one thing, spoken language necessarily implies one or more listeners, whereas written language may often have to express meditative moods and trains of inward reflection that move through the mind without trace of external reference, and that would lose their special traits by the introduction of any suspicion that they were to be overheard. Again, even granting that all composition must be supposed to be meant, by the fact of its existence, to be addressed to a body of readers, it still remains to be shown that indirect address to the inner ear should follow the same method and rhythm as address directly through impressions on the outer organ. The attitude of the recipient mind is different, and there is the symbolism of a new medium between it and the speaker. The writer, being cut off from all those effects which are producible by the physical intonations of the voice, has to find substitutes for them by other means, by subtler cadences, by a more varied modulation, by firmer notes, by more complex circuits, than suffice for the utmost perfection of spoken language, which has all the potent and manifold aids of personality. In writing, whether it be prose or verse, you are free

to produce effects whose peculiarity one can only define vaguely, by saying that the senses have one part less in them than in any other of the forms and effects of art, and the imaginary voice one part more. But the question need not be laboured here, because there can be no dispute as to the quality of Macaulay's prose. Its measures are emphatically the measures of spoken deliverance. Those who have made the experiment, pronounce him to be one of the authors whose works are most admirably fitted for reading aloud. His firmness and directness of statement, his spiritedness, his art of selecting salient and highly coloured detail, and all his other merits as a narrator, keep the listener's attention, and make him the easiest of writers to follow.

Although, however, clearness, directness, and positiveness are master qualities and the indispensable foundations of all good style, yet does the matter plainly by no means end with them. And it is even possible to have these virtues so unhappily proportioned and inauspiciously mixed with other turns and casts of mind, as to end in work with little grace or harmony or fine tracery about it, but only overweening purpose and vehement will. And it is overweeningness and self-confident will that are the chief notes of Macaulay's style. It has no benignity. Energy is doubtless a delightful quality, but then Macaulay's energy is perhaps energy without momentum, and he impresses us more by a strong volubility than by volume. It is the energy of interests and intuitions, which though they are profoundly sincere if ever they were sincere in any man, are yet in

the relations which they comprehend, essentially superficial.

Still, trenchancy whether in speaker or writer is a most effective tone for a large public. It gives them confidence in their man, and prevents tediousness—except to those who reflect how delicate is the poise of truth, and what steps and pits encompass the dealer in unqualified propositions. To such persons, a writer who is trenchant in every sentence of every page, who never lapses for a line into the contingent, who marches through the intricacies of things in a blaze of certainty, is not only a writer to be distrusted, but the owner of a doubtful and displeasing style. It is a great test of style to watch how an author disposes of the qualifications, limitations, and exceptions that clog the wings of his main proposition. The grave and conscientious men of the seventeenth century insisted on packing them all honestly along with the main proposition itself, within the bounds of a single period. Burke arranges them in tolerably close order in the paragraph. Dr. Newman, that winning writer, disperses them lightly over his page. Of Macaulay it is hardly unfair to say that he despatches all qualifications into outer space before he begins to write, or if he magnanimously admits one or two here and there, it is only to bring them the more imposingly to the same murderous end.

We have spoken of Macaulay's interests and intuitions wearing a certain air of superficiality; there is a feeling of the same kind about his attempts to be genial. It is not truly festive. There is no abandonment in it. It has no deep root in moral humour, and

is merely a literary form, resembling nothing so much as the hard geniality of some clever college tutor of stiff manners, entertaining undergraduates at an official breakfast-party. This is not because his tone is bookish; on the contrary, his tone and level are distinctly those of the man of the world. But one always seems to find that neither a wide range of cultivation, nor familiar access to the best Whig circles, had quite removed the stiffness and self-conscious precision of the Clapham Sect. We would give much for a little more flexibility, and would welcome ever so light a consciousness of infirmity. As has been said, the only people whom men cannot pardon are the perfect. Macaulay is like the military king who never suffered himself to be seen, even by the attendants in his bed-chamber, until he had had time to put on his uniform and jack-boots. His severity of eye is very wholesome; it makes his writing firm, and firmness is certainly one of the first qualities that good writing must have. But there is such a thing as soft and considerate precision, as well as hard and scolding precision. Those most interesting English critics of the generation slightly anterior to Macaulay,—Hazlitt, Lamb, De Quincey, Leigh Hunt,—were fully his equals in precision, and yet they knew how to be clear, acute, and definite without that edginess and inelasticity which is so conspicuous in Macaulay's criticisms, alike in their matter and their form.

To borrow the figure of an old writer, Macaulay's prose is not like a flowing vestment to his thought, but like a suit of armour. It is often splendid and

glittering, and the movement of the opening pages of his History is superb in its dignity. But that movement is exceptional. As a rule there is the hardness, if there is also often the sheen, of highly-wrought metal. Or, to change our figure, his pages are composed as a handsome edifice is reared, not as a fine statue or a frieze "with bossy sculptures graven" grows up in the imaginative mind of the statuary. There is no liquid continuity, such as indicates a writer possessed by his subject and not merely possessing it. The periods are marshalled in due order of procession, bright and high-stepping; they never escape under an impulse of emotion into the full current of a brimming stream. What is curious is that though Macaulay seems ever to be brandishing a two-edged gleaming sword, and though he steeps us in an atmosphere of belligerency, yet we are never conscious of inward agitation in him, and perhaps this alone would debar him from a place among the greatest writers. For they, under that reserve, suppression, or management, which is an indispensable condition of the finest rhetorical art, even when aiming at the most passionate effects, still succeed in conveying to their readers a thrilling sense of the strong fires that are glowing underneath. Now when Macaulay advances with his hectoring sentences and his rough pistolling ways, we feel all the time that his pulse is as steady as that of the most practised duellist who ever ate fire. He is too cool to be betrayed into a single phrase of happy improvisation. His pictures glare, but are seldom warm. Those strokes of minute circumstantiality which he loved

so dearly, show that even in moments when his imagination might seem to be moving both spontaneously and ardently, it was really only a literary instrument, a fashioning tool and not a melting flame. Let us take a single example. He is describing the trial of Warren Hastings. "Every step in the proceedings," he says, "carried the mind either backward through many troubled centuries to the days when the foundations of our constitution were laid; or far away over boundless seas and deserts, to dusky nations living under strange stars, worshipping strange gods, and writing strange characters from right to left." The odd triviality of the last detail, its unworthiness of the sentiment of the passage, leaves the reader checked; what sets out as a fine stroke of imagination dwindles down to a sort of literary conceit. And this puerile twist, by the way, is all the poorer, when it is considered that the native writing is really from left to right, and only takes the other direction in a foreign, that is to say, a Persian alphabet. And so in other places, even where the writer is most deservedly admired for gorgeous picturesque effect, we feel that it is only the literary picturesque, a kind of infinitely glorified newspaper-reporting. Compare, for instance, the most imaginative piece to be found in any part of Macaulay's writings with that sudden and lovely apostrophe in Carlyle, after describing the bloody horrors that followed the fall of the Bastille in 1789:—"O evening sun of July, how, at this hour, thy beams fall slant on reapers amid peaceful woody fields; on old women spinning in cottages; on ships far out in the silent main; on balls at the Orangerie

at Versailles, where high-rouged dames of the Palace are even now dancing with double-jacketed Hussar officers;—and also on this roaring Hell-porch of a Hôtel de Ville!" Who does not feel in this the breath of poetic inspiration, and how different it is from the more composite of the rhetorician's imagination, assiduously working to order?

This remark is no disparagement of Macaulay's genius, but a classification of it. We are interrogating our own impressions, and asking ourselves among what kind of writers he ought to be placed. Rhetoric is a good and worthy art, and rhetorical authors are often more useful, more instructive, more really respectable than poetical authors. But it is to be said that Macaulay as a rhetorician will hardly be placed in the first rank, by those who have studied both him and the great masters. Once more, no amount of embellishment or emphasis or brilliant figure suffices to produce this intense effect of agitation rigorously restrained; nor can any beauty of decoration be in the least a substitute for that touching and penetrative music, which is made in prose by the repressed trouble of grave and high souls. There is a certain music, we do not deny, in Macaulay, but it is the music of a man everlastingly playing for us rapid solos on a silver trumpet, never the swelling diapasons of the organ, and never the deep ecstasies of the four magic strings. That so sensible a man as Macaulay should keep clear of the modern abomination of dithyrambic prose, that rank and sprawling weed of speech, was natural enough; but then the effects which we miss in him, and which, considering how strong the literary

faculty in him really was, we are almost astonished to miss, are not produced by dithyramb but by repression. Of course the answer has been already given; Macaulay, powerful and vigorous as he was, had no agitation, no wonder, no tumult of spirit to repress. The world was spread out clear before him; he read it as plainly and as certainly as he read his books; life was all an affair of direct categoricals.

This was at least one secret of those hard modulations and shallow cadences. How poor is the rhythm of Macaulay's prose we only realise by going with his periods fresh in our ear to some true master of harmony. It is not worth while to quote passages from an author who is in everybody's library, and Macaulay is always so much like himself that almost any one page will serve for an illustration exactly as well as any other. Let any one turn to his character of Somers, for whom he had so much admiration, and then turn to Clarendon's character of Falkland;—"a person of such prodigious parts of learning and knowledge, of that inimitable sweetness and delight in conversation, of so flowing and obliging a humanity and goodness to mankind, and of that primitive simplicity and integrity of life, that if there were no other brand upon this odious and accursed civil war than that single loss, it must be most infamous and execrable to all posterity." Now Clarendon is not a great writer, not even a good writer, for he is prolix and involved, yet we see that even Clarendon, when he comes to a matter in which his heart is engaged, becomes sweet and harmonious in his rhythm. If we turn to a prose-writer of the very first place, we are

instantly conscious of a still greater difference. How flashy and shallow Macaulay's periods seem, as we listen to the fine ground-base that rolls in the melody of the following passage of Burke's, and it is taken from one of the least ornate of all his pieces :—

You will not, we trust, believe that, born in a civilised country, formed to gentle manners, trained in a merciful religion, and living in enlightened and polished times, where even foreign hostility is softened from its original sternness, we could have thought of letting loose upon you, our late beloved brethren, these fierce tribes of savages and cannibals, in whom the traces of human nature are effaced by ignorance and barbarity. We rather wished to have joined with you in bringing gradually that unhappy part of mankind into civility, order, piety, and virtuous discipline, than to have confirmed their evil habits and increased their natural ferocity by fleshing them in the slaughter of you, whom our wiser and better ancestors had sent into the wilderness with the express view of introducing, along with our holy religion, its humane and charitable manners. We do not hold that all things are lawful in war. We should think every barbarity, in fire, in wasting, in murders, in tortures, and other cruelties, too horrible and too full of turpitude for Christian mouths to utter or ears to hear, if done at our instigation, by those who we know will make war thus if they make it at all, to be, to all intents and purposes, as if done by ourselves. We clear ourselves to you our brethren, to the present age, and to future generations, to our king and our country, and to Europe, which as a spectator, beholds this tragic scene, of every part or share in adding this last and worst of evils to the inevitable mischiefs of a civil war.

We do not call you rebels and traitors. We do not

call for the vengeance of the crown against you. We do not know how to qualify millions of our countrymen, contending with one heart for an admission to privileges which we have ever thought our own happiness and honour, by odious and unworthy names. On the contrary, we highly revere the principles on which you act, though we lament some of their effects. Armed as you are, we embrace you, as our friends and as our brethren by the best and dearest ties of relation.

It may be said that there is a patent injustice in comparing the prose of a historian criticising or describing great events at second hand, with the prose of a statesman taking active part in great events, fired by the passion of a present conflict, and stimulated by the vivid interest of undetermined issues. If this be a well-grounded plea, and it may be so, then of course it excludes a contrast not only with Burke, but also with Bolingbroke, whose fine manners and polished gaiety give us a keen sense of the grievous garishness of Macaulay. If we may not institute a comparison between Macaulay and great actors on the stage of affairs, at least there can be no objection to the introduction of Southey as a standard of comparison. Southey was a man of letters pure and simple, and it is worth remarking that Macaulay himself admitted that he found so great a charm in Southey's style, as nearly always to read it with pleasure, even when Southey was talking nonsense. Now, take any page of the Life of Nelson or the Life of Wesley; consider how easy, smooth, natural, and winning is the diction and the rise and fall of the sentence, and yet how varied the

rhythm and how nervous the phrases; and then turn to a page of Macaulay, and wince under its stamping emphasis, its over-coloured tropes, its exaggerated expressions, its unlovely staccato. Southey's History of the Peninsular War is now dead, but if any of my readers has a copy on his highest shelves, I would venture to ask him to take down the third volume, and read the concluding pages, of which Coleridge used to say that they were the finest specimen of historic euolgy he had ever read in English, adding with forgivable hyperbole, that they were more to the Duke's fame and glory than a campaign. "Foresight and enterprise with our commander went hand in hand; he never advanced but so as to be sure of his retreat; and never retreated but in such an attitude as to impose upon a superior enemy," and so on through the sum of Wellington's achievements. "There was something more precious than these, more to be desired than the high and enduring fame which he had secured by his military achievements, the satisfaction of thinking to what end those achievements had been directed; that they were for the deliverance of two most injured and grievously oppressed nations; for the safety, honour, and welfare of his own country; and for the general interests of Europe and of the civilised world. His campaigns were sanctified by the cause; they were sullied by no cruelties, no crimes; the chariot-wheels of his triumphs have been followed by no curses; his laurels are entwined with the amaranths of righteousness, and upon his death-bed he might remember his victories among his good works."

What is worse than want of depth and fineness of intonation in a period, is all gross excess of colour, because excess of colour is connected with graver faults in the region of the intellectual conscience. Macaulay is a constant sinner in this respect. The wine of truth is in his cup a brandied draught, a hundred degrees above proof, and he too often replenishes the lamp of knowledge with naphtha instead of fine oil. It is not that he has a spontaneous passion for exuberant decoration, which he would have shared with more than one of the greatest names in literature. On the contrary, we feel that the exaggerated words and dashing sentences are the fruit of deliberate travail, and the petulance or the irony of his speech is mostly due to a driving predilection for strong effects. His memory, his directness, his aptitude for forcing things into firm outline, and giving them a sharply defined edge,—these and other singular talents of his all lent themselves to this intrepid and indefatigable pursuit of effect. And the most disagreeable feature is that Macaulay was so often content with an effect of an essentially vulgar kind, offensive to taste, discordant to the fastidious ear, and worst of all, at enmity with the whole spirit of truth. By vulgar we certainly do not mean homely, which marks a wholly different quality. No writer can be more homely than Mr. Carlyle, alike in his choice of particulars to dwell upon, and in the terms or images in which he describes or illustrates them, but there is also no writer further removed from vulgarity. Nor do we mean that Macaulay too copiously enriches the tongue with infusion from any

Doric dialect. For such raciness he had little taste. What we find in him is that quality which the French call brutal. The description, for instance, in the essay on Hallam, of the licence of the Restoration, seems to us a coarse and vulgar picture, whose painter took the most garish colours he could find on his palette, and then laid them on in untempered crudity. And who is not sensible of the vulgarity and coarseness of the account of Boswell? "If he had not been a great fool he would not have been a great writer . . . . he was a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb," and so forth, in which the shallowness of the analysis of Boswell's character matches the puerile rudeness of the terms. Here again, is a sentence about Montesquieu. "The English at that time," Macaulay says of the middle of the eighteenth century, "considered a Frenchman who talked about constitutional checks and fundamental laws as a prodigy not less astonishing than the learned pig or musical infant." And he then goes on to describe the author of one of the most important books that ever were written, as "specious but shallow, studious of effect, indifferent to truth—the lively President," and so forth, stirring in any reader who happens to know Montesquieu's influence, a singular amazement. We are not concerned with the judgment upon Montesquieu, nor with the truth as to contemporary English opinion about him, but a writer who devises an antithesis to such a man as Montesquieu in learned pigs and musical infants, deliberately condescends not merely to triviality or levity, but to flat vulgarity of thought, to something of mean and ignoble associa-

tion. Though one of the most common, this is not Macaulay's only sin in the same unfortunate direction. He too frequently resorts to vulgar gaudiness. For example, there is in one place a certain description of an alleged practice of Addison's. Swift had said of Esther Johnson that "whether from easiness in general, or from her indifference to persons, or from her despair of mending them, or from the same practice which she most liked in Mr. Addison, I cannot determine; but when she saw any of the company very warm in a wrong opinion, she was more inclined to confirm them in it than to oppose them. It prevented noise, she said, and saved time." [1] Let us behold what a picture Macaulay draws on the strength of this passage. "If his first attempts to set a presuming dunce right were ill-received," Macaulay says of Addison, "he changed his tone, 'assented with civil leer,' and lured the flattered coxcomb deeper and deeper into absurdity." To compare this transformation of the simplicity of the original into the grotesque heat and overcharged violence of the copy, is to see the homely maiden of a country village transformed into the painted flaunter of the city.

One more instance. We should be sorry to violate any sentiment of τὸ σεμνόν about a man of Macaulay's genius, but what is a decorous term for a description of the doctrine of Lucretius's great poem, thrown in parenthetically, as the "silliest and meanest system of natural and moral philosophy!" Even disagreeable artifices of composition may be forgiven, when they serve to vivify truth, to quicken or to widen the

[1] Forster's *Swift*, i. 265.

moral judgment, but Macaulay's hardy and habitual recourse to strenuous superlatives is fundamentally unscientific and untrue. There is no more instructive example in our literature than he, of the saying that the adjective is the enemy of the substantive.

In 1837 Jeffrey saw a letter written by Macaulay to a common friend, and stating the reasons for preferring a literary to a political life. Jeffrey thought that his illustrious ally was wrong in the conclusion to which he came. "As to the tranquillity of an author's life," he said, "I have no sort of faith in it. And as to fame, if an author's is now and then more lasting, it is generally longer withheld, and except in a few rare cases it is of a less pervading or elevating description. A great poet or a great *original* writer is above all other glory. But who would give much for such a glory as Gibbon's? Besides, I believe it is in the inward glow and pride of consciously influencing the destinies of mankind, much more than in the sense of personal reputation, that the delight of either poet or statesman chiefly consists." And Gibbon had at least the advantage of throwing himself into a religious controversy that is destined to endure for centuries. He, moreover, was specifically a historian, while Macaulay has been prized less as a historian proper than as a master of literary art. Now a man of letters, in an age of battle and transition like our own, fades into an ever-deepening distance, unless he has while he writes that touching and impressive quality,—the presentiment of the eve; a feeling of the difficulties and interests that will

engage and distract mankind on the morrow. Nor can it be enough for enduring fame in any age merely to throw a golden halo round the secularity of the hour, or to make glorious the narrowest limitations of the passing day. If we think what a changed sense is already given to criticism, what a different conception now presides over history, how many problems on which Macaulay was silent are now the familiar puzzles of even superficial readers, we cannot help feeling that the eminent man whose life we are all about to read, is the hero of a past which is already remote, and that he did little to make men better fitted to face a present of which, close as it was to him, he seems hardly to have dreamed.

VALEDICTORY[1]

THE present number of the Review marks the close of a task which was confided to me no less than fifteen years ago—*grande mortalis ævi spatium*, a long span of one's mortal days. Fifteen years are enough to bring a man from youth to middle age, to test the working value of convictions, to measure the advance of principles and beliefs, and, alas! to cut off many early associates and to extinguish many lights. It is hardly possible that a Review should have been conducted for so considerable a time without the commission of some mistakes; articles admitted which might as well have been left out, opinions expressed which have a crudish look in the mellow light of years, phrases dropped in the heat or hurry of the moment which one would fain obliterate. Many a regret must rise in men's minds on any occasion that compels them to look back over a long reach of years. The disparity between aim and performance, the unfulfilled promise, the wrong turnings taken at critical points—as an accident of the hour draws us to take stock of a complete period of our lives, all these things rise up in private and internal judgment

[1] On the writer's retirement from the editorship of the *Fortnightly Review*, in 1882.

against anybody who is not either too stupid or too fatuously complacent to recognise facts when he sees them. But the mood passes. Time, happily, is merciful, and men's memories are benignly short.

More painful is the recollection of those earlier contributors of ours who have vanished from the world. Periodical literature is like the manna in the wilderness; it quickly loses its freshness, and to turn over thirty volumes of old Reviews can hardly be exhilarating at the best: least of all so, when it recalls friends and coadjutors who can give their help no more. George Henry Lewes, the founder of the Review, and always cordially interested in its fortunes, has not survived to see the end of the reign of his successor. His vivacious intelligence had probably done as much as he was competent to do for his generation, but there were other important contributors, now gone, of whom this could not be said. In the region of political theory, the loss of J. E. Cairnes was truly lamentable and untimely. He had, as Mill said of him, "that rare qualification among writers on political and social subjects—a genuine scientific intellect." Not a month passes in which one does not feel how great an advantage it would have been to be able to go down to Blackheath, and discuss the perplexities of the time in that genial and manly companionship, where facts were weighed with so much care, where conclusions were measured with such breadth and comprehension, and where even the great stolid idols of the Cave and the Market Place were never too rudely buffeted. Of a very different order of mind from Cairnes, but not less

to be permanently regretted by all of us who knew him, was Mr. Bagehot, whose books on the English Constitution, on Physics and Politics, and the fragment on the Postulates of Political Economy, were all published in these pages. He wrote, in fact, the first article in the first number. Though himself extremely cool and sceptical about political improvement of every sort, he took abundant interest in more ardent friends. Perhaps it was that they amused him; in return his good-natured ironies put them wholesomely on their mettle. As has been well said of him, he had a unique power of animation without combat; it was all stimulus and yet no contest; his talk was full of youth, yet had all the wisdom of mature judgment (*R. H. Hutton*). Those who were least willing to assent to Bagehot's practical maxims in judging current affairs, yet were well aware how much they profited by his Socratic objections, and knew, too, what real acquaintance with men and business, what honest sympathy and friendliness, and what serious judgment and interest all lay under his playful and racy humour.

More untimely, in one sense, than any other was the death of Professor Clifford, whose articles in this Review attracted so much attention, and I fear that I may add, gave for a season so much offence six or seven years ago. Cairnes was scarcely fifty when he died, and Bagehot was fifty-one, but Clifford was only four-and-thirty. Yet in this brief space he had not merely won a reputation as a mathematician of the first order, but had made a real mark on his time, both by the substance of his speculations in science

religion, and ethics, and by the curious audacity with which he proclaimed at the pitch of his voice on the housetops religious opinions that had hitherto been kept among the family secrets of the *domus Socratica.* It is melancholy to think that exciting work, done under pressure of time of his own imposing, should have been the chief cause of his premature decline. How intense that pressure was the reader may measure by the fact that a paper of his on *The Unseen Universe*, which filled eighteen pages of the Review, was composed at a single sitting that lasted from a quarter to ten in the evening till nine o'clock the following morning. As one revolves these and other names of eminent men who actively helped to make the Review what it has been, it would be impossible to omit the most eminent of them all. Time has done something to impair the philosophical reputation and the political celebrity of J. S. Mill; but it cannot alter the affectionate memory in which some of us must always hold his wisdom and goodness, his rare union of moral ardour with a calm and settled mind. He took the warmest interest in this Review from the moment when I took it up, partly from the friendship with which he honoured me, but much more because he wished to encourage what was then—though it is now happily no longer—the only attempt to conduct a periodical on the principles of free discussion and personal responsibility. While recalling these and others who are no more, it was naturally impossible for me to forget the constant and valuable help that has been so freely given to me, often at much sacrifice of their own convenience,

by those friends and contributors who are still with us. No conductor ever laid down his *bâton* with a more cordial and sincere sense of gratitude to those who took their several parts in his performance.

One chief experiment which the Review was established to try was that of signed articles. When Mr. Lewes wrote his Farewell Causerie, as I am doing now, he said: "That we have been enabled to bring together men so various in opinion and so distinguished in power has been mainly owing to the principle adopted of allowing each writer perfect freedom; which could only have been allowed under the condition of personal responsibility. The question of singing articles had long been debated; it has now been tested. The arguments in favour of it were mainly of a moral order; the arguments against it, while admitting the morality, mainly asserted its inexpediency. The question of expediency has, I venture to say, been materially enlightened by the success of the Review." The success of other periodicals, conducted still more rigorously on the principle that every article ought to bear its writer's signature, leaves no further doubt on the subject; so that it is now almost impossible to realise that only fifteen or sixteen years ago scarcely anybody of the class called practical could believe that the sacred principle of the Anonymous was doomed. One of the shrewdest publishers in Edinburgh, and also himself the editor of a famous magazine, once said to me while Mr. Lewes was still editor of this Review, that he had always thought highly of our friend's judgment "until he had taken up the senseless

notion of a magazine with signed articles and open to both sides of every question." Nobody will call the notion senseless any longer. The question is rather how long the exclusively anonymous periodicals will resist the innovation.

Personally I have attached less stern importance to signature as an unvarying rule than did my predecessor; though even he was compelled by obvious considerations of convenience to make his chronique of current affairs anonymous. Our practice has been signature as the standing rule, occasionally suspended in favour of anonymity when there seemed to be sufficient reason. On the whole it may be said that the change from anonymous to signed articles has followed the course of most changes. It has not led to one-half either of the evils or of the advantages that its advocates and its opponents foretold. That it has produced some charlatanry, can hardly be denied. Readers are tempted to postpone serious and persistent interest in subjects, to a semi-personal curiosity about the casual and unconnected deliverances of the literary or social star of the hour. That this conception has been worked out with signal ability in more cases than one; that it has made periodical literature full of actuality; that it has tickled and delighted the palate—is all most true. The obvious danger is lest we should be tempted to think more of the man who speaks than of the precise value of what he says.

One indirect effect that is not unworthy of notice in the new system is its tendency to narrow the

openings for the writer by profession. If an article is to be signed, the editor will naturally seek the name of an expert of special weight and competence on the matter in hand. A reviewer on the staff of a famous journal once received for his week's task, *General Hamley on the Art of War*, a three-volume novel, a work on dainty dishes, and a translation of Pindar. This was perhaps taxing versatility and omniscience over-much, and it may be taken for granted that the writer made no serious contribution to tactics, cookery, or scholarship. But being a man of a certain intelligence, passably honest, and reasonably painstaking, probably he produced reviews sufficiently useful and just to answer their purpose. On the new system we should have an article on General Hamley's work by Sir Garnet Wolseley, and one on the cookery-book from M. Trompette. It is not certain that this is all pure gain. There is a something to be said for the writer by profession, who, without being an expert, will take trouble to work up his subject, to learn what is said and thought about it, to penetrate to the real points, to get the same mastery over it as an advocate or a judge does over a patent case or a suit about rubrics and vestments. He is at least as likely as the expert to tell the reader all that he wants to know, and at least as likely to be free from bias and injurious prepossession.

Nor does experience, so far as it has yet gone, quite bear out Mr. Lewes's train of argument that the "first condition of all writing is sincerity, and that one means of securing sincerity is to insist

on personal responsibility," and that this personal responsibility can only be secured by signing articles. The old talk of " literary bravoes," " men in masks," " anonymous assassins," and so forth, is out of date. Longer experience has only confirmed the present writer's opinion, expressed here from the very beginning: " Everybody who knows the composition of any respectable journal in London knows very well that the articles which those of our own way of thinking dislike most intensely are written by men whom to call bravoes in any sense whatever would be simply monstrous. Let us say, as loudly as we choose, if we see good reason, that they are half informed about some of the things which they so authoritatively discuss; that they are under strong class feeling; that they have not mastered the doctrines which they are opposing; that they have not sufficiently meditated their subject; that they have not given themselves time to do justice even to their scanty knowledge. Journalists are open to charges of this kind; but to think of them as a shameless body, thirsting for the blood of better men than themselves, or ready to act as an editor's instrument for money, involves a thoroughly unjust misconception."

As to the comparative effects of the two systems on literary quality, no prudent observer with adequate experience will lay down an unalterable rule. Habit no doubt counts for a great deal, but apart from habit there are differences of temperament and peculiar sensibilities. Some men write best when they sign what they write; they find impersonality a

mystification and an incumbrance; anonymity makes them stiff, pompous, and over-magisterial. With others, however, the effect is just the reverse. If they sign, they become self-conscious, stilted, and even pretentious; it is only when they are anonymous that they recover simplicity and ease. It is as if an actor who is the soul of what is natural under the disguises of his part, should become extremely artificial if he were compelled to come upon the stage in his own proper clothes and speaking only in his ordinary voice.

The newspaper press has not yet followed the example of the new Reviews, but we are probably not far from the time when here, too, the practice of signature will make its way. There was a silly cry at one time for making the disuse of anonymity compulsory by law. But we shall no more see this than we shall see legal penalties imposed for publishing a book without an index, though that also has been suggested. The same end will be reached by other ways. Within the last few years a truly surprising shock has been given to the idea of a newspaper, "as a sort of impersonal thing, coming from nobody knows where, the readers never thinking of the writer, nor caring whether he thinks what he writes, so long as *they* think what he writes." Of course it is still true, and will most likely always remain true, that, like the Athenian Sophist, great newspapers will teach the conventional prejudices of those who pay for it. A writer will long be able to say that, like the Sophist, the newspaper reflects

the morality, the intelligence, the tone of sentiment, of its public, and if the latter is vicious, so is the former. But there is infinitely less of this than there used to be. The press is more and more taking the tone of a man speaking to a man. The childish imposture of the editorial We is already thoroughly exploded. The names of all important journalists are now coming to be as publicly known as the names of important members of parliament. There is even something over and above this. More than one editor has boldly aspired to create and educate a public of his own, and he has succeeded. The press is growing to be much more personal, in the sense that its most important directors are taking to themselves the right of pursuing an individual line of their own, with far less respect than of old to the supposed exigencies of party or the *communiqués* of political leaders. The editor of a Review of great eminence said to the present writer (who, for his own part, took a slightly more modest view) that he regarded himself as equal in importance to seventy-five Members of Parliament. It is not altogether easy to weigh and measure with this degree of precision. But what is certain is that there are journalists on both sides in politics to whom the public looks for original suggestion, and from whom leading politicians seek not merely such mechanical support as they expect from their adherents in the House of Commons, nor merely the uses of the vane to show which way the wind blows, but ideas, guidance, and counsel, as from persons of co-equal authority with themselves. England is still a long way from the point at which

French journalism has arrived in this matter. We cannot count an effective host of Girardins, Lemoinnes, Abouts, or even Cassagnacs and Rocheforts, each recognised as the exponent of his own opinions, and each read because the opinions written are known to be his own. But there is a distinctly nearer approach to this as the general state of English journalism than there was twenty years ago.

Of course nobody of sense supposes that any journalist, however independent and however possessed by the spirit of his personal responsibility, tries to form his opinions out of his own head, without reference to the view of the men practically engaged in public affairs, the temper of Parliament and the feeling of constituencies, and so forth. All these are part of the elements that go to the formation of his own judgment, and he will certainly not neglect to find out as much about them as he possibly can. Nor, again, does the increase of the personal sentiment about our public prints lessen the general working fidelity of their conductors to a party. It is their duty, no doubt, to discuss the merits of measures as they arise. In this respect any one can see how radically they differ from the Member of Parliament, whose business is not only to discuss but to act. The Member of Parliament must look at the effect of his vote in more lights than one. Besides the merits of the given measure, it is his duty to think of the wishes of those who chose him to represent them; and if, moreover, the effect of voting against a measure of which he disapproves

would be to overthrow a whole Ministry of which he strongly approves, then, unless some very vital principle indeed were involved, to give such a vote would be to prefer a small object to a great one, and would indicate a very queasy monkish sort of conscience. The journalist is not in the same position. He is an observer and a critic, and can afford, and is bound, to speak the truth. But even in his case the disagreement, as Burke said, "will be only enough to indulge freedom, without violating concord or disturbing arrangement." There is a certain "partiality which becomes a well-chosen friendship." "Men thinking freely will, in particular instances, think differently. But still as the greater part of the measures which arise in the course of public business are related to, or dependent on, some great leading general principles in government, a man must be peculiarly unfortunate in the choice of his political company if he does not agree with them at least nine times in ten." The doctrine that was good enough for Burke in this matter may be counted good enough for most of us. Some of the current talk about political independence is mere hypocrisy; some of it is mere vanity. For the new priest of Literature is quite as liable to the defects of spiritual pride and ambition as the old priest of the Church, and it is quite as well for him that he should be on his guard against these scarlet and high-crested sins.

The success of Reviews, of which our own was the first English type, marks a very considerable revolution in the intellectual habits of the time. They have brought abstract discussion from the

library down to the parlour, and from the serious student down to the first man in the street. We have passed through a perfect cyclone of religious polemics. The popularity of such Reviews means that really large audiences, *le gros public*, are eagerly interested in the radical discussion of propositions which twenty years ago were only publicly maintained, and then in their crudest, least true, and most repulsive form, in obscure debating societies and little secularist clubs. Everybody, male or female, who reads anything serious at all, now reads a dozen essays a year to show, with infinite varieties of approach and of demonstration, that we can never know whether there be a Supreme Being or not, whether the soul survives the body, or whether mind is more and other than a mere function of matter. No article that has appeared in any periodical for a generation back excited so profound a sensation as Mr. Huxley's memorable paper On the Physical Basis of Life, published in this Review in February 1869. It created just the same kind of stir that, in a political epoch, was made by such a pamphlet as the *Conduct of the Allies* or the *Reflections on the French Revolution.* This excitement was a sign that controversies which had hitherto been confined to books and treatises were now to be admitted to popular periodicals, and that the common man of the world would now listen and have an opinion of his own on the bases of belief, just as he listens and judges in politics, or art, or letters. The clergy no longer have the pulpit to themselves, for the new Reviews became more powerful pulpits, in which

heretics were at least as welcome as orthodox. Speculation has become entirely democratised. This is a tremendous change to have come about in little more than a dozen years. How far it goes, let us not be too sure. It is no new discovery that what looks like complete tolerance may be in reality only complete indifference. Intellectual fairness is often only another name for indolence and inconclusiveness of mind, just as love of truth is sometimes a fine phrase for temper. To be piquant counts for much, and the interest of seeing on the drawing-room tables of devout Catholics and high-flying Anglicans article after article, sending divinities, creeds, and Churches all headlong into limbo, was indeed piquant. Much of all this elegant dabbling in infidelity has been a caprice of fashion. The Agnostic has had his day with the fine ladies, like the black footboy of other times, or the spirit-rapper and table-turner of our own. What we have been watching, after all, was perhaps a tournament, not a battle.

It would not be very easy for us now, and perhaps it would not be particularly becoming at any time, to analyse the position that has been assigned to this Review in common esteem. Those who have watched it from without can judge better than those who have worked within. Though it has been open, so far as editorial goodwill was concerned, to opinions from many sides, the Review has unquestionably gathered round it some of the associations of sect. What that sect is, people have found it difficult to describe with anything like precision. For a long time it was the fashion to label the Review as Comtist,

and it would be singularly ungrateful to deny that it has had no more effective contributors than some of the best known disciples of Comte. By-and-by it was felt that this was too narrow. It was nearer the truth to call it the organ of Positivists in the wider sense of that designation. But even this would not cover many directly political articles that have appeared in our pages, and made a mark in their time. The memorable programme of Free Labour, Free Land, Free Schools, Free Church had nothing at all Positivist about it. Nor could that programme and many besides from the same pen and others be compressed under the nickname of Academic Liberalism. There was too strong a flavour of action for the academic and the philosophic. This passion for a label, after all, is an infirmity. Yet people justly perceived that there seemed to be a certain undefinable concurrence among writers coming from different schools and handling very different subjects. Perhaps the instinct was right which fancied that it discerned some common drift, a certain pervading atmosphere, and scented a subtle connection between speculations on the Physical Basis of Life and the Unseen Universe, and articles on Trades Unions and National Education.

So far as the Review has been more specially identified with one set of opinions than another, it has been due to the fact that a certain dissent from received theologies has been found in company with new ideas of social and political reform. This suspicious combination at one time aroused considerable anger.

The notion of anything like an intervention of the literary and scientific class in political affairs touched a certain jealousy which is always to be looked for in the positive and practical man. They think as Napoleon thought of men of letters and savans :— " Ce sont des coquettes avec lesquelles il faut entretenir un commerce de galanterie, et dont il ne faut jamais songer à faire ni sa femme ni son ministre." Men will listen to your views about the Unknowable with a composure that instantly disappears if your argument comes too near to the Rates and Taxes. It is amusing, as we read the newspapers to-day, to think that Mr. Harrison's powerful defence of Trade Unions fifteen years ago caused the Review to be regarded as an incendiary publication. Some papers that appeared here on National Education were thought to indicate a deliberate plot for suppressing the Holy Scriptures in the land. Extravagant misjudgment of this kind has passed away. But it was far from being a mistake to suppose that the line taken here by many writers did mean that there was a new Radicalism in the air, which went a good deal deeper than fidgeting about an estimate or the amount of the Queen's contribution to her own taxes. Time has verified what was serious in those early apprehensions. Principles and aims are coming into prominence in the social activity of to-day which would hardly have found a hearing twenty years ago, and it would be sufficient justification for the past of our Review if some writers in it have been instrumental in the process of showing how such principles and aims meet the requirements of

the new time. Reformers must always be open to the taunt that they find nothing in the world good enough for them. "You write," said a popular novelist to one of this unthanked tribe, "as if you believed that everything is bad." "Nay," said the other, "but I do believe that everything might be better." Such a belief naturally breeds a spirit which the easy-goers of the world resent as a spirit of ceaseless complaint and scolding. Hence our Liberalism here has often been taxed with being ungenial, discontented, and even querulous. But such Liberals will wrap themselves in their own virtue, remembering the cheering apophthegm that "those who are dissatisfied are the sole benefactors of the world."

This will not be found, I think, too lofty, or too thrasonical an estimate of what has been attempted. A certain number of people have been persuaded to share opinions that fifteen years ago were more unpopular than they are now. A certain resistance has been offered to the stubborn influence of prejudice and use and wont. The original scheme of the Review, even if there had been no other obstacle, prevented it from being the organ of a systematic and constructive policy. There is not, in fact, a body of systematic political thought at work in our own day. The Liberals of the Benthamite school surveyed society and institutions as a whole; they connected their advocacy of political and legal changes with carefully formed theories of human nature; they considered the great art of Government in connection with the character of man, his proper

education, his potential capacities. Yet, as we then said, it cannot be pretended that we are less in need of systematic politics than our fathers were sixty years since, or that general principles are now more generally settled even among members of the same party than they were then. The perplexities of to-day are as embarrassing as any in our history, and they may prove even more dangerous. The renovation of Parliamentary government; the transformation of the conditions of the ownership and occupation of land; the relations between the Government at home and our adventurers abroad in contact with inferior races; the limitations on free contract and the rights of majorities to restrict the private acts of minorities; these are only some of the questions that time and circumstances are pressing upon us. These are in the political and legislative sphere alone. In Education, in Economics, the problems are as many. Yet ideas are hardly ripe for realisation. We shall need to see great schools before we can make sure of powerful parties. Meanwhile, whatever gives freedom and variety to thought, and earnestness to men's interest in the world, must contribute to a good end.

NOTES

POPULAR CULTURE

p. 3, l. 12. **Castellani.** Signor A. Castellani of Rome, a famous connoisseur of ancient Roman jewelry. He wrote a *Memoir of the Jewellery of the Ancients* (1861). He revived the lost Etruscan art of granulating gold surfaces and exhibited examples at the London Exhibition of 1872. His great collection of peasant jewelry here referred to was got together for the Paris Exhibition of 1867 and afterwards acquired for the Victoria and Albert Museum.

p. 5, l. 2. **Montesquieu,** French philosopher and historian (1689-1755), author of *Lettres persanes* and *L'Esprit des lois.* The first of these was a satire, in the style of Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* and other similar works of the eighteenth century, on the social, political and ecclesiastical abuses of the day. The latter (1748) was probably the greatest French work of the age. It was an exhaustive analysis of constitutions, ancient and modern, and indirectly attacked the current despotism in France. Montesquieu was the idol of the moderate reformers, and a great admirer of English constitutional liberty.

p. 5, l. 26. **Racine** (1639-99) with Corneille, the prince of the tragedians of the French " classical " school.

p. 6, l. 6. **Ste. Beuve** (1804-69), the French critic and essayist, admired and imitated by Matthew Arnold, who says that " as a guide to bring us to a knowledge of the French genius and literature he is unrivalled." He was

a regular contributor from the outset to the *Revue des deux Mondes*. His chief writings are his *Portraits* and *Causeries du Lundi*.

p. 8, l. 24. **Dr. Arnold.** Thomas Arnold of Rugby, father of the poet (1795-1842), the greatest of English public-school headmasters. See *Tom Brown's School Days* and Matthew Arnold's beautiful *Rugby Chapel*.

p. 10, l. 28. **Freeman** (1823-1892), the author of the *History of the Norman Conquest*. In 1884 he was made Regius Professor of History at Oxford. He was, in style and method, the antithesis of his opponent Froude: to him history was a science and not a picturesque narrative, and he insisted on the importance of the study of original sources. The unity of all history was his favourite theme.

p. 12, l. 6. **Chaldeans.** An ancient Mesopotamian nation, famous in the Old Testament as astrologers and magicians.

p. 12, l. 6. **Goethe.** Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832) was to Germany what Shakespeare was to England. He has been called "the incarnate spirit of the nineteenth century, the prophet of a new age not yet born." His first drama, *Götz von Berlichingen*, appeared in 1771, his sentimental romance, *Werther*, in 1785, and the first part of *Faust*, the greatest and most typical creation of his brain, in 1808. Goethe's influence over Carlyle and Emerson was very great, and Matthew Arnold was also profoundly affected by him.

p. 12, l. 6. **Faraday.** Michael Faraday (1791-1867) was a pioneer of the modern science of electricity.

p. 12, l. 7. **Darwin.** Charles Darwin (1809-1882) published in 1859 his epoch-making *Origin of Species*, in which the theory of Natural Selection was propounded.

p. 12, l. 16. **What Conflux.** *Paradise Regained*, iv. 61 ff.

p. 12, l. 23. **Damascus,** captured 638 A.C. by the Mahommedans and for the next ninety years the capital of the Ommayad caliphs; **Bagdad,** the capital of the Abbasid caliphs, founded by the Caliph Mansur in 762 A.C.,

and the scene of many of the stories of the Arabian Nights. **Seville,** the capital of the Eastern Caliphate of Cordova. To the Mahommedans, medieval Europe owed much of its mathematics, astronomy and medicine, and even its knowledge of Aristotle. The Crusades profoundly influenced European culture.

p. 13, l. 25. **Dilettanti . . . virtuosi.** Triflers. The former is a favourite term of reprobation in Carlyle.

p. 13, l. 28. **Wallace.** The magnificant collection of *objets d'art,* armour and pictures belonging to Sir Richard Wallace, the great art collector and philanthropist (1818-1890), was bequeathed to the nation by Lady Wallace in 1897. It was finally lodged in Hertford House, Manchester Square, which was acquired and adapted for the purpose by the Government. Pending the reopening of Hertford House, Wallace had sent some of the finest of his pictures and other treasures to be exhibited in Bethnal Green, one of the poorest quarters of London.

p. 14 (footnote). **Draper** (1811-1882), an American scientist, author of the *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe* (1862). **Saint Vincent de Paul** (1576-1660) a French saint, who spent his life in mission-work among the Barbary pirates and the galley-slaves of Marseilles. His order is associated with all kinds of charitable and philanthropic work. **Newton.** Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), England's greatest astronomer, discovered the law of gravity. His mathematical discoveries were embodied in his famous *Principia* (1684).

p. 15, l. 1. **British Constitution.** The remark is attributed to Burke by Carlyle. See the opening paragraph of the *Hero as King.*

p. 15, l. 14. **Medusae.** A species of jelly-fish. The reference is to the science of zoology.

p. 15, l. 23. **Bentham.** Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) was an exponent of the utilitarian school of philosophy so fiercely denounced by Carlyle, with its formula of the "greatest happiness of the greatest number." John Stuart Mill, Morley's own guide, philosopher and friend, was a distinguished exponent of this school of thought.

p. 16, l. 11. **Voltaire.** François Marie Arouet (1694-1778), historian, poet, dramatist, novelist and philosopher, and the greatest of the intellectual forerunners of the Revolution. He spent his life in exposing the abuses of Church and State, and the rottenness of the *Ancien Régime.* He lived most of his time at Ferney in Geneva. "He gave the death-stab to modern superstition," says Carlyle. Among the many cases of wrong which he denounced may be mentioned those of Jean Calas and the Chevalier de la Barre, cruelly put to death by the Church, the Comte de Lally, and our own Admiral Byng (in *Candide*).

p. 16, l. 25. **St. Kilda.** A little island in the Outer Hebrides.

p. 19, l. 11. **Novum Organum.** Bacon's great work, which revolutionized the methods of science (1620).

p. 19, l. 22. **Jevons** (1835-1882), English economist and logician.

p. 23, l. 7. **Marphurius . . . Sganarelle.** Characters in *Don Juan* (1665), one of the masterpieces of the French comedian, Molière.

p. 23, l. 28. **Whately** (1787-1863), Archbishop of Dublin, well known as a theologian, logician and economist at Dublin and Oxford in his day.

p. 27, l. 7. **Imitation of Christ.** A famous devotional work, written at the end of the fourteenth century and usually attributed to Thomas à Kempis.

p. 27, l. 30. **Webster** (1782-1852). American orator and statesman.

p. 31, l. 15. **The Moving Finger Writes.** Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyam,* v. li. (first edition).

p. 31, l. 29. **Brougham** (1778-1868), Liberal statesman and orator, chiefly celebrated for his defence of the unhappy Queen Caroline in 1820.

p. 33, l. 12. **Beethoven** (1770-1827), **Handel** (1685-1759). Two of the greatest musical composers, the former German and the latter a naturalised Englishman of German origin.

THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

p. 35, l. 1. **Mr. Goschen.** Viscount Goschen (1831-1907) was a Liberal Unionist statesman who made his name as Chancellor of the Exchequer to Lord Salisbury's Government (1886-92). He took a great interest in education, and especially in the University Extension Movement.

p. 37, l. 13. **Jowett** (1817-93), Master of Balliol. Cf. p. 73.

p. 37, l. 13. **Lang, Myers, Leaf,** translators of Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*.

p. 38, l. 6. **Pericles.** The great statesman under whom Athens attained the zenith of her glory, political, literary and artistic. He is the hero of Thucydides' History, from which the words quoted below, φιλοκάλουμεν ἀνευ μαλακίας (ii. 40) are taken. They are part of a famous oration, setting forth the Athenian ideals of life, purported to have been made over the cenotaph erected in honour of those who fell in the first year of the Peloponnesian War.

p. 42, l. 30. **Dr. Arnold.** See p. 8, *note*.

p. 45, l. 32. **Mark Pattison** (1813-84), Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, and a well-known scholar and writer.

p. 47, l. 10. **Bentley** (1662-1742), one of the greatest of English classical scholars. He is known for his *Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris* and for his share in the once famous controversy "the Battle of the Books" between the upholders of ancient and modern learning, in which Sir William Temple and other men of letters took part.

p. 48, l. 24. **Sir William Hamilton** (1788-1856), professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh University.

p. 49, l. 4. **Webster.** See page 27, *note*.

p. 51, l. 1. **Mahabharata.** The *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana* are the Sanskrit Epics, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Hindu India. **Sheking,** more properly *Shu Chung*, is the Canon of History of ancient China, going back to 2357 B.C., collected by Confucius.

p. 52, l. 1. **Mr. Frederic Harrison** (1831-1923), the English exponent of the Positivist Philosophy of Comte, and a life-long friend of Lord Morley.

p. 54, l. 22. **Emerson.** Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), American essayist and philosopher. Carlyle, who introduced him into England, has been called " a militant Emerson."

p. 55, l. 30. **René** (1409-80), King of Sicily, poet, painter and patron of the arts.

p. 59, l. 1. **Ninth Symphony** by Beethoven: **Transfiguration** by Raphael: symbolizing the highest level of perfection in music and art.

APHORISMS

p. 65, l. 1. **Gibbon.** " It was on the day, or rather night of the 27th June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house in my garden. . . . I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy in the recovery of my freedom and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken leave of an old and agreeable companion."

p. 66, l. 24. **Academics.** *Paradise Regained*, iv. 278 ff.

p. 67, l. 9. **Wisdom of Solomon.** These books are in the Apocrypha or uncanonical portion of the Bible, which " the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply to them to establish any doctrine " (Art. vi.).

p. 67, l. 16. **Erasmus** (1466-1536), Dutch scholar and theologian, one of the greatest of the " humanists " of the Renaissance, and a pioneer, though he did not realize the fact, of the Protestant Reformation. His Greek Testament is his most memorable achievement. His numerous letters, his " Praise of Folly," and his *Adagia* or Aphorisms reveal a keenly satirical nature, directed chiefly against the clerical abuses of the day. He was " the Voltaire of the Renaissance."

p. 67, l. 21. **Schopenhauer** (1788-1860), German philosopher and opponent of Hegel. His chief work was *The World as Will and Idea* (1819). He owed something to Hindu philosophy. He is usually remembered for his "pessimism."

p. 68, l. 19. **Franklin.** Benjamin Franklin (1706-90), American statesman, journalist and scientist, famous for his experiments on electricity and the phenomenon of lightning in particular. His "Poor Richard's Almanacks," which appeared from 1732 to 1757, under the pseudonym of Richard Saunders, were immensely popular.

p. 69, l. 28. **Montaigne** (1533-1592), the French essayist, who may be justly regarded as the founder of the modern essay. His genial and frank self-revelation, and the disarming candour with which he takes the reader into his confidence, are his characteristic qualities.

p. 69, l. 28. **Plutarch** (46-120 A.C.), the Greek biographer and moralist. His *Parallel Lives* is his best-known work, but beside this there is his collection of sixty essays on ethical and kindred subjects known as *Moralia.* This work contains a collection of Aphorisms (*ἀποφθέγματα*) dedicated to Trajan.

p. 70, l. 19. **Marcus Aurelius.** The greatest of the Antonine emperors (121-180 A.C.). He tried to put into practice as Emperor of Rome the precepts of the Stoic philosophy. His heritage to the world was his *Meditations,* reflections and self-admonition jotted down at odd moments in his busy career.

p. 70, l. 25. **Pascal.** Blaise Pascal (1623-62), who wrote *Pensées,* a number of reflections "on man and fate and all existence." Another work of his was the caustic *Provincial Letters* directed against the Jesuits. He was one of the foremost of the Jansenist party of Port Royal in the great controversy with the Jesuits, which raged in France throughout the seventeenth century.

p. 70 (footnote). **La Bruyère** (1645-96), the French essayist whose *Caractères* (1688) represent a new departure in that form of literature. His style is short and

sententious, and is made up to a large extent of maxims and pregnant reflections and aphorisms.

p. 73, l. 14. **Jowett . . . Thucydides.** The translation of Thucydides by Benjamin Jowett, the Master of Balliol, is only less celebrated, as a classical rendering of an ancient author into English prose, than his versions of Plato and of Aristotle's *Politics*. Thucydides (471-396 B.C.) was the historian of the Peloponnesian war, which carried on the story of ancient Greece from Herodotus, the Father of History. Herodotus, however, is picturesque and objective, whereas Thucydides is essentially reflective and philosophical in his outlook on life.

p. 74, l. 24. **Charron.** Pierre Charron (1541-1603), a French philosopher, author of *De La Sagesse* (1601), a popular system of moral philosophy, which evidently owes a good deal to Montaigne.

p. 75, l. 10. **Weimar.** Charles Augustus, Duke of Weimar, was a liberal patron of art and letters, and his court was the resort of literary men and musicians from all over Germany. It is, of course, chiefly celebrated for its connection with Goethe and Schiller.

p. 75, l. 30. **Rochefoucauld.** François de La Rochefoucauld (1613-80) has been described as "the greatest maxim writer of France, one of her best memoir writers, and perhaps the most complete and accomplished representative of her ancient nobility." His *Maxims* (1665) are unrivalled for brevity, clearness and point, and are packed full of condensed worldly widsom. Cf. p. 91 ff.

p. 76, l. 24. **Theophrastus Such.** A volume of somewhat miscellaneous essays published by George Eliot in 1879.

p. 76, l. 24. **Living Writer.** George Meredith (1828-1909), *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* was published in 1859.

p. 77, l. 8. **Sir Thomas Overbury** (1581-1613), the witty and ingenious describer of *Characters* (1614), and the originator, in English, of this type of essay. The idea is traced to the Greek writer Theophrastus.

p. 77, l. 14. **Clarendon** (1609-74), Royalist soldier, statesman and historian, who described the civil war

from his own point of view in his *History of the Great Rebellion*, published in 1704, an imperishable classic in spite of its obvious bias. For Lord Morley's view of Clarendon, see the essay on *Macaulay*, p. 143.

p. 77, l. 14. **Burnet.** Bishop of Salisbury (1643-1715). His *History of his own Times* (1724-34) is the standard history of the reign of Queen Anne.

p. 77, l. 18. **St. Simon** (1675-1755), a French diplomatist and author of voluminous and gossipy memoirs of the French court as he saw it.

p. 77, l. 19 **Cardinal De Retz.** Paul de Gondi (1614-79), a well-known intriguer who took an active part in the civil disturbances known as the Fronde (October 1648), in which he was supported by the Paris bourgeoisie. In his admirable *Memoirs* he gives a clever picture of La Rochefoucauld.

p 77, l. 24. **Falkland.** One of the many fine portraits in Clarendon's History is that of the romantic young Viscount Falkland, who perished in the first battle of Newbury (1643) Falkland was deeply moved by the tragedy of civil war, and would often " with a shrill and sad accent ingeminate *Peace, Peace.*" See Lord Morley's essay on *Macaulay*, p. 143.

p. 77, l. 25. **Chillingworth** (1602-44), a divine and controversialist of the reign of Charles I. He was a godson of Laud and a supporter of the Royalist cause, but a convinced Protestant and opponent of the Jesuits He had been a Catholic for a brief period of his life.

p. 77, l. 26. **Lauderdale** (1616-82), a statesman of the reign of Charles II. He was a member of the famous " Cabal " ministry which succeeded to power after the fall of Clarendon in 1667.

p. 79, l. 11. **Harrington** (1611-1677) was the author of *Oceana* (1656), a " Utopia " in which an ideal government for England is elaborated in much prolix detail. Harrington's hero is Oliver Cromwell, whom he represents under the pseudonym of Olphaus Megaletor.

p. 80, l. 20. **Machiavelli** (1469-1527), an Italian statesman who wrote the famous treatise known as *The Prince*

(1513), which has been looked upon as the foundation of modern political science. It deals with the qualities of a successful autocrat and the means whereby he may cement his power. His political theories,—the ruler is justified in using any means to secure his end, and morals are subordinated to political expediency,—have been frequently condemned, and Machiavelli has become a by-word for unscrupulousness.

p. 81, l. 2. **Sabbathless,** *i.e.* without a holiday.

p. 82, l. 11. **Epictetus,**

> That halting slave, who in Nicopolis
> Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son
> Cleared Rome of what most shamed him.

He was originally a Greek slave, who was set free and became an exponent of the Stoic philosophy. With other philosophers, he was banished from Rome by Domitian. His *Discourses* are only second to the famous *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius

p. 83, l. 5. **Schiller** (1759-1805), friend and rival of Goethe, and the greatest of the German dramatists. His chief works are patriotic and historical dramas, *Wallenstein*, *Wilhelm Tell*, etc.

p. 83, l. 16. **Lichtenberg** (1742-99) was equally celebrated as a physicist and a satirist. His biting wit involved him in many controversies. His *Gedanken und Maximen*, ed. Grisebach, appeared in 1871, and selected *Aphorismen*, ed. Leitzmann, in 1902-6.

p. 83, l. 29. **Herder** (1744-1803), a German philosopher and critic of the school of Lessing. His *magnum opus* was the *Ideen zur Philosopie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784-91).

p. 84, l. 15. **De Bonald** (1754-1840), a French writer on social and political philosophy of the "theocratic" school. One of his leading theories was "the divine origin of language."

p. 84, l. 20. **Radowitz** (1797-1853), a friend of Frederick William IV., who was largely responsible for the Prussian constitution of 1847. He was minister of foreign affairs for many years.

p. 85, l. 8. **Klinger** (1752-1831), a German dramatist and novelist who initiated the *Sturm und Drang* epoch with a drama bearing that title (1776).

p. 85, l. 11. **Rousseau.** Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was one of the foremost of the intellectual forerunners of the French Revolution. His morbid, excitable nature is reflected in his *Confessions*, a human document of singular frankness, and his Romances, *Émile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. In his theory of the Social Contract he definitely attacked Divine Right of Kings, and maintained that the real sovereignty rests with the people. Liberty and equality are the " Natural Rights " of Man.

p. 85, l. 23. **Vauvenargues** (1715-47) has sometimes been called the " modern Stoic." He was a moralist of some repute, and his " Reflections " and " Maxims " appear as an appendage to his *Introduction à la Connaissance de l'esprit humain* (1746).

p. 85, l. 28. **Chamfort** (1741-94). Theoretically a republican and friend of Mirabeau, he nevertheless denounced the excesses of the Jacobin party until he had to commit suicide in order to avoid the scaffold. His *Maximes et Pensées*, praised by Mill, have been pronounced as, after those of La Rochefoucauld, " the most brilliant and suggestive sayings that have been given to the modern world."

p. 87, l. 9. **Succedaneum,** a substitute.

p. 87, l. 25. **The strong, much-toiling sage.** M. Arnold, *Stanzas in Memory of the author of Obermann.*

p. 89, l. 29. **Balthasar Gracian** (1601-58), a Spanish moralist. A translation of his *Art of Worldly Wisdom* by Joseph Jacobs was published in the *Golden Treasury Series*.

p. 91, l. 4. **Stewart.** Dugald Stewart, the Scottish philosopher (1753-1828).

p. 95, l. 31. **Fénelon** (1651-1715), bishop of Cambrai and author of the philosophic romance *Télémaque*.

p. 95, l. 27. **Helvétius** (1715-71), a French political writer, a forerunner of utilitarianism.

p. 97, l. 31. **Rivarol** (1753-1801), a French epigrammatist, noted for his sharp conversationalist sayings.

p. 97, l. 32. **Joubert** (1745-1824), a French moralist, of whom there are sympathetic studies by Sainte Beuve (*Causeries du lundi*, vol. i.) and Matthew Arnold (*Essays in Criticism*, vol i.).

p. 98, l. 32. **Tocqueville** (1805-59), a French political writer of liberal tendencies.

THE DEATH OF MR. MILL

John Stuart Mill (1806-73), Lord Morley's guide, philosopher and friend, was the son of James Mill, the disciple of Bentham and historian of India. The boy was brought up in the doctrines of the utilitarian school, and as we learn from his *Autobiography*, shewed a precocious and omnivorous talent for learning at a very early age. After a successful career in the India House, Mill determined to devote his energies to his favourite themes. His *Logic* appeared in 1843 as an outcome of his study of Whewell's *Inductive Sciences*, in which he formulated the methods of scientific investigation and joined on the new logic as a supplement to the old. After this he turned to Political Economy, in which he appears as the disciple of Ricardo. His great work, the *Principles of Political Economy*, came out in 1848. It is not too much to say that Mill did for political economy in the nineteenth century what Adam Smith had done in the eighteenth. From 1858 to 1865 Mill was turning to politics: among his chief writings during that period were the famous essays on *Liberty* and *Representative Government*. In 1865 Mill entered Parliament as Member for Westminster, and remained there for three years. He was too academic and too theoretical to make a first-rate politician, and he earned from Gladstone the title of the Saint of Rationalism. He died at Avignon in 1873.

It is difficult at this distance to appreciate the extraordinary influence of Mill upon his generation. He expounded and systematized the Benthamite philosophy,

which Carlyle denounced in such unmeasured terms. In politics, he belonged to the school of advanced liberalism, and worked ceaselessly for the amelioration of the lower orders and for the emancipation of women. In religion, he was an ardent rationalist. Lord Morley's essay is a graceful and moving tribute, couched in language of singular beauty, to the master whom he revered and followed, and who had, more than anyone else, contributed to the formation of his political and religious ideas. It should be read in connection with his other essay on *Mr. Mill's Autobiography*.

p. 104, l. 8. **Locke** (*Essays concerning Human Understanding*, 1690); **Hume** (*Treatise of Human Nature*, 1739); **Adam Smith** (*Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1759); **Bentham** (*Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 1780); **James Mill** (*Analysis of the Human Mind*, 1829), may be regarded as the chief exponents of the empirical school of philosophy; the mind has no original intuitions; all we know is derived from experience.

p. 104, l. 25. **Turgot** (1727-81), the finance minister of Louis XVI. Had his reforms been carried out, he might have saved France from the financial bankruptcy which was one of the causes of the Revolution, but the forces of reaction opposed to him were too strong. He had considerable influence over Adam Smith. His life was written by his friend and contemporary Condorcet (1786), a philosopher and moderate revolutionist, the story of whose tragic end in 1794 is well known. See Lord Morley's essays on both (*Biographical Studies*).

p. 105, l. 5. **Austin.** The author of the standard work on *Jurisprudence* (1832). He was a friend of Mill's.

p. 110, l. 32. **Bossuet**, a celebrated French preacher of the reign of Louis XIV. (1627-1704).

p. 114, l. 22. **The dying Socrates**. See Plato's dialogue the *Phaedo*, which represents the last scene in the philosopher's life, and compare it with the concluding portion of the *Apology*.

MACAULAY

Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) first came to the fore with his essay on *Milton*, which he sent to the *Edinburgh Review* in 1825. "Where did you get that style?" exclaimed Jeffreys when he read it. In 1830, he entered the House of Commons on the Whig side, and from 1834 to 1838 he was in India, as Legal Adviser to the Supreme Council: here he was employed in drafting the penal code, and perhaps less happily in educational reform. It was Macaulay's famous minute which turned the scale against the Orientalists and led Lord Bentinck's government to organize Indian education on western lines. On his return he started work upon his *History of England*. This great work was intended to cover the whole period from James II. to George IV, but the numerous calls upon Macaulay's time stood in his way, and only five volumes were actually completed, covering a period of fifteen years. During all this time he was busily employed in contributing essays to the *Edinburgh Review* and as a member of the government. In 1857 he was raised to the House of Lords and two years later he died. Macaulay was equally famous as an essayist, a historian and an orator. His famous *Lays* are historical ballads of no mean order. The brilliance of Macaulay's style and the unflagging interest of his narrative (his avowed aim was to write history like a novel) blinded his contemporaries to his failings. Macaulay was unashamedly partizan. He wrote history like a politician, his object being to advocate Whig principles. His concern is with deeds, the pageant of history: underlying causes have little or no interest for him. He has little concern in the things of the spirit, and is a professed materialist: it is noteworthy that Germany alone almost in ancient and modern literature, had no attraction for him, and his condemnation of Indian philosophy in his educational minute was characteristic of the man. Lord Morley's essay on Macaulay is one of his best efforts in literary criticism. The two writers were bound together by a certain community of political views,

though there is a world of difference between Macaulay's strenuous partizanship and Morley's calm, tolerant and philosophic outlook on life. Lord Morley compares and contrasts him with Mill, Burke and Southey. He praises his marked individuality of style, his wide knowledge, and his genius for narration, while he condemns him for his superficiality, his sacrifice of truth for rhetorical effect, his shallowness and vulgarity of sentiment.

p. 118, l. 22. **Jean Paul.** Jean Paul Richter (1763-1825), a German philosopher and humorist, greatly admired by Carlyle. *Der Einzige*, Unique.

p. 119, l. 26. **Quintilian** (35-95 A.C.), a Roman rhetorician and critic, who wrote (88 A.C.) the *Institutio Oratoris*, or Training of an Orator.

p. 119, l. 27. **Ovid,** the Roman elegiac poet (43 B.C.-17 A.C.). *Si Animi*, etc. " If he had preferred to restrain rather than indulge his emotions, what could that fellow not have achieved ? "

p. 122, l. 4. **Mackintosh.** A Scottish liberal statesman, famous for his *Vindiciae Gallicae* (1791), a reply to Burke's *French Revolution*, and the *Progress of Ethical Philosophy* (1838).

p. 122, l. 25. **style coupé . . . soutenu.** Laconic or sustained style.

p. 123, l. 16. **Victor Hugo** (1802-85), the greatest of the French poets and novelists of the earlier half of the nineteenth century. Among his poems is *La Légende des Siècles*, 1859, and among his dramas, *Hernani*, 1830. His best-known novels are *Notre Dame*, *Les Misérables* and *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*. His magnificent odes (Victor Hugo was a great master of metre) were admired and imitated by Swinburne.

P. 126, l. 26. **Plautus** (*c.* 184 B.C.), the comic dramatist of ancient Rome.

p. 127, l. 9. **multa . . . multum.** " many," " much."

p. 130, l. 13. **Turenne.** Marshal of France (1611-75). The reference in Macaulay is to the battle of the Dunes near Dunkirk, June 14, 1658, where a corps of English

veterans lent by Cromwell to Turenne beat the Spaniards and Frondeurs under Condé and captured the town, just a century after the loss of Calais.

p. 131, l. 4. **Cobden** (1804-65), liberal politician and free-trader, friend of John Bright and the leader of the Anti-Corn Law agitation. His *Life* by Lord Morley appeared in 1881.

p. 131, l. 9. **Thiers** (1797-1877), French statesman and historian, who, after the collapse of the Second Empire in 1871, undertook the reconstruction of the French Republic.

p. 131, l. 10. **Mazzini** (1805-72), the Italian patriot, the prophet of Italian Unity, as Garibaldi was its knight-errant and Cavour its final realizer.

p. 131, l. 22. **City of the Violet Crown.** Pindar's epithet for Athens.

p. 132, l. 31. **Olympiad**. A period of four years in Greek chronology. The first Olympiad was in 776 B.C. Socrates was put to death on a charge of impiety in 399 B.C., his accusers being Anytus, Melctus and Lycon. His dialectical method, with its use of the ἔλεγχος or destructive questioning, by which he strove to eradicate the "conceit of false knowledge" in his hearers, had made him many enemies, who looked upon his teaching as *merely* negative and destructive.

p. 133, l. 10. **Semper.** "Always, everywhere and by all," the definition of the Catholic faith.

p. 135, l. 18. **Boileau** (1636-1711), the greatest critic of the French "Classical" school. His *L'art poétique*, itself imitated from Horace, is freely used by Pope in his *Essay on Criticism*. **Et mon vers**, "and my verse, well or ill, always means something."

p. 135, l. 24. **Scaliger**. Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609), son of an equally illustrious father, was the founder of modern classical scholarship and criticism.

p. 135, l. 25. **Basques.** An indigenous people, surviving in the region of the Pyrenees, and speaking an extraordinary agglutinative tongue which has no affinity to any other European language.

p. 138, l. 21. **Newman.** Cardinal Newman (1801-90) was one of the leaders of the Tractarian Movement in Oxford (named after his series of *Tracts for the Times*), which sought to bring the Church of England back to Catholicism. The fierce controversy between the Catholic and Protestant factions, which raged from 1833 to 1845, resulted in most of the High Church party seceding to the Church of Rome. In 1864, in answer to a challenge by Kingsley, Newman wrote his famous *Apologia pro vita sua*, a charming and masterly analysis of his spiritual struggles. He is one of the greatest masters of English prose, and his style is seen in highest perfection in his *Idea of a University*. In spite of their differences of outlook, Lord Morley speaks of Newman in terms of high esteem. Cf. *Study of Literature*, p. 51.

p. 139, l. 10. **Clapham Sect.** The reference is to Macaulay's father Zacchary, who, together with William Wilberforce and other pious Low Churchmen, formed a small religious circle in Clapham for prayer and worship.

p. 142, l. 29. **dithyramb**, a Greek term for bombastic or inflated writing.

p. 143, l. 18. **Somers** (1651-1716), the great Whig statesman and lawyer of the reign of William III. Macaulay's twentieth chapter contains a fine series of portraits of Sunderland, Russell, Somers, Montague, Wharton, Harley and others.

p. 145, l. 18 **Bolingbroke.** Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678-1751), Tory statesman and author of the *Idea of a Patriot King* and other political works. He was Pope's patron and a brilliant wit and stylist.

p. 148, l. 1. **Doric,** Rustic.

p. 149, l. 6. **Esther Johnson,** the famous "Stella" who played so prominent a part in Swift's tragic career.

p. 149, l. 26. τὸ σεμνόν. Decorum. It is characteristic of Macaulay, who could never shew any sympathy with abstract thought, that he should have despised the noble *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius, the object of which was to dispel religious superstition and all its horrors by expounding the atomic theory of Democritus (*c.* 55 B.C.).

p. 150, l. 6. **Jeffrey**. Lord Jeffrey (1773-1850) was one of the founders of the *Edinburgh Review*, which he edited, 1803-29. He discovered Macaulay, who contributed most of his *Essays* to the *Edinburgh*. He was a critic of the slashing style fashionable a century ago.

VALEDICTORY

p. 153, l. 12. **George Henry Lewes** (1817-78), the friend of George Eliot, founded the *Fortnightly* in 1865. He was a journalist and critic of a high order, and was the author of a popular History of Philosophy and of the standard life of Goethe in English. He was a follower of Comte.

p. 153, l. 29. **Cairnes**. John Elliot Cairnes (1823-75), a well-known journalist and political economist.

p. 153, l. 30. **Idols of the Cave**. The doctrine of the Idols or popular fallacies is taken from Bacon (*Adv. of Learning*, II. xiv. *Nov. Org.*, i. 39-68, etc). There are four species of Idols: those of the Tribe, the Cave, the Market Place and the Theatre.

p. 154, l. 2. **Bagehot**. Walter Bagehot (1826-77), author of *The English Constitution* (1867) and other works on politics and economics. He came of a banking family and brought into literature a flavour of practical common sense. His *Literary Studies* and *Biographical Studies* are full of vigorous, original criticism, and brilliant writing. His works were edited by his friend and brother-journalist, Richard Holt Hutton.

p. 154, l. 24. **Professor Clifford.** William Kingdon Clifford (1845-79), Professor of Mathematics at University College and a writer on scientific topics.

p. 155, l. 4. **domus Socratica.** The learned few.

p. 162, l. 2. **Girardins**, there were two writers of this name, Delphine and Émile; the latter was the inaugurator of cheap journalism in France, and a well-known figure in the Second Empire and after. **Lemoinnes, Abouts. Cassagnacs, Rocheforts,** French journalists of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

p. 164, l. 19. **Huxley** (1825-95), the greatest of the Victorian biologists, who applied to biology the evolutionary theory of Darwin. The paper in question traced all life to protoplasm. **Conduct of the Allies** (1711) Swift's famous pamphlet on Marlborough's campaign in Flanders which brought about the downfall of the Whigs.

p. 166, l. 3. **Comte.** Auguste Comte (1798-1857), the founder of the Positivist Philosophy. This school of thought exercised a great attraction upon the circle with which Lord Morley was identified in his younger days,—Mill, G. H. Lewes and above all Frederic Harrison,—though he himself never subscribed to it. Positivism is a creed whose aim is the service of humanity. God and personal immortality are eliminated; the saints of Positivism,—Gutenberg and Shakespeare and all who have elevated the human race—belong to the "choir invisible"

Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence.

The crowning study of the Positivist is Sociology. This rather vague form of rationalism, after a short-lived *furore* in the mid-Victorian era, has now gone the way of other panaceas of its kind.

p. 167, l. 6. **Ce sont,** etc. "There are coquettes with whom one may carry on a flirtation, but whom one never dreams of making one's wife or one's servant."

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